Closer to the self while far from home: A longitudinal study about Chinese students' experiences in Germany

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the changing identity and sense of belonging of a group of master's students from the People's Republic of China during their stay in Germany. Its main purpose is to understand how the students perceived their attachment to China politically, culturally, and ethnically and how these perceptions gradually changed during their experiences in Germany, where they developed different strategies to negotiate their identity and belonging. The study applied a combination of a longitudinal method and a biographical narrative interview method to track 25 Chinese students' lived experiences and their change processes from their first semester in Germany until after they graduated, in order to capture critical moments in their transitions. The dissertation provides longitudinal evidence that reveals the complex and multi-layered nature of the changing progress of these students' identities. It also supports the idea that the students' transcultural experiences in Germany may have helped them to "unlearn" a normalized concept of "Chineseness," which was partially imbued by the Patriotic Education Campaign in China from the 1990s, and to go beyond their state-bound national loyalty to postulate a potential transcultural position in today's world.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Dissertation untersucht die sich verändernde Identität und das Zugehörigkeitsgefühl einer Gruppe von Master-Studierenden aus der Volksrepublik China während ihres Aufenthalts in Deutschland. Hauptziel der Arbeit ist es zu verstehen, wie die Studierenden ihre Verbundenheit mit China politisch, kulturell und ethnisch wahrgenommen haben und wie sich diese Wahrnehmungen während ihrer Erfahrungen in Deutschland, wo sie unterschiedliche Strategien zur Aushandlung ihrer Identität und Zugehörigkeit entwickelten, allmählich verändert haben. Mit einer Kombination aus Längsschnittmethode und biographisch-narrativer Befragung wurden die Lebenserfahrungen von 25 chinesischen Studierenden und ihre Veränderungsprozesse vom ersten Semester in Deutschland bis zum Ende des Studiums nachgezeichnet und kritische Momente in ihren Übergängen festgehalten. Die Dissertation liefert longitudinale Evidenz, die die komplexe und vielschichtige Natur des Veränderungsprozesses der Identitäten dieser Studierenden offenbart. Sie unterstützt auch die Idee, dass die transkulturellen Erfahrungen der Studierenden in Deutschland ihnen geholfen haben könnten, ein normalisiertes Konzept des „Chinesischen“, das teilweise durch die so genannte Patriotische Erziehungskampagne in China in den 1990er Jahren geprägt war, zu „verlernen“ und über ihre staatlich gebundene nationale Loyalität hinaus eine mögliche transkulturelle Position in der heutigen Welt zu postulieren.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research questions

There have been many Chinese students going abroad, especially to the West, to study during the past three decades.[1] What have they experienced? Did these experiences change them during their time abroad? In particular, did they experience changes in their identity or in their conception of China and other countries as well as of themselves? In response to these questions, this study investigated whether Chinese students experienced identity changes during their stay in Germany, and, if so, how and why these changes took place, and how they influenced these students' lives. These questions further included how young students respond to changes, how they make sense of various, sometimes even contradictory, information and experiences received in China and Germany, and how they reconstruct their perceptions of themselves when they stay abroad as international students, among other things. However, in order to obtain answers to these questions, I also needed to: 1) understand the students' motivation for choosing Germany as the place for their further study, their expectations for their German experience, and whether these expectations had been fulfilled, and 2) understand their experiences in Germany and their reactions to the host environment. Therefore, I divided my overarching research aim into three specific steps, which I called research objectives. In other words, my research objectives were the road map for achieving my research aim. Despite the fact that some of the objectives may appear descriptive, they were inseparable, being part of my road map. The research objectives were as follows:

1. What motivated students to study in Germany, and how did they imagine Germany before leaving China?
2. What did the students experience in terms of friendship and wider social contacts in Germany, and how did they negotiate a new identity and sense of belonging in Germany with their social contacts in Germany?
3. What changes did the students experience in Germany, and how did these changes develop?

[1] Chinese Ministry of Education, "Statistics on Chinese Students Studying Abroad in 2018," March 27, 2019, http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201903/t20190327_375704.html.

1.2 Current state of the study

There have been some issues with the past research on Chinese students studying abroad. Firstly, these studies have been mainly restricted to analysing the students' academic adaptation and psychological wellness, with rare attention to how the students' overseas experiences challenge their existing views and therefore reconstruct their sense of self and belonging. Despite much research on the academic experiences of international students, then, there has been little research that helps us to fathom what their everyday experience feels like.

Secondly, many researchers have focused on large-scale survey data about Chinese students studying abroad, examining student satisfaction and their adaptation to the host environment. A number of these research projects have deployed standard questionnaires that normally remain at a surface level, so a great deal more is required to unpack the lived experiences of students and the changes they experience. Moreover, there has been a lack of longitudinal studies based on qualitative methods that study Chinese students in German universities and trace, in detail, their experience of the journey from China to Germany and their post-graduation destinations. The voices of these students themselves have mainly been excluded. There has been little knowledge of *how* students frame the significance of their experiences, including changes and development, in terms of their identity and sense of belonging.[2] Therefore, the present research situation left space for the current study to investigate *what* changes of identity students have experienced, *how* they have negotiated them, and *how* they have digested and directly articulated their experiences.

Furthermore, many of the previous studies have ignored the fact that students are a special group, in terms of their life stage. Students who travel from China to study abroad at a university are normally in their early and mid-20s. They are known as "emerging adults," who are young people "growing up" and "constructing their subjectivity," and who have great potential to transform.[3] During this critical life stage, "early developmental and social trajectories may be reinforced or reversed, early risks may accumulate or be counteracted, new experiences can be turning points or sources of stagnation or thriving, and developmental tasks

[2] Jennifer M. Phelps, "International Doctoral Students' Navigations of Identity and Belonging in a Globalizing University," *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, no. 11, (2016), 1−15.
[3] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (2000): 469-480, doi:10.1037/0003-066x.55.5.469.

not completed may constitute a significant setback for the future."[4] These young Chinese students' experiences overseas at this critical stage of life, then, may well play an important role in their growth. Due to the changing dynamic of this growth, it could be recorded via a longitudinal approach combined with qualitative interviews with individuals, in order to track their development.

Thirdly, although research has already been conducted on Chinese students studying abroad, Chinese students in many of the previous studies were described as passive and submissive learners. Further, they have also often been labelled as "Confucian-heritage learners" together with other Asian students from countries like Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, etc., implying that they are influenced by "Chinese traditional values," especially Confucian values.[5] This general understanding of "Chineseness" is sometimes essentialised and reduced to something stagnant that seems to be perpetually changeless. Chinese students are often observed as having "problems" or "deficits," for they are often observed as "quiet" students with lower participation than their fellow students. However, these labels may deny the complexity of the experiences many Chinese individuals have had abroad and simplify the understanding of "Chineseness." As Wang acutely pointed out, the term "Chinese" will increasingly fail to convey a reality that is becoming more diverse. More words with requisite adjectives are urgently needed to accurately capture the richness and diversity of Chinese communities.[6]

Finally, studies about Chinese students abroad mainly have focused on Anglophone countries, especially the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.[7] Despite the rapid growth in the number of Chinese students leaving to study in continental European countries, not many researchers have turned their attention to destinations such as Germany,

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[4] IOM (Institute of Medicine) and NRC (National Research Council), *Investing in the health and well-being of young adults,* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press: 2014).

[5] David A. Watkins and John B. Biggs, (eds), *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences*, (Hong Kong and Camberwell: CERC and ACER:1996).

[6] Gungwu Wang, *Joining the Modern World: Inside and Outside China*, 1st ed. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2000), 57.

[7] E.g. Vanessa Fong, *Paradise Redefined* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2011); Lihong Wang, "Chinese Postgraduate Students in A British University: Their Learning Experiences and Learning Beliefs," (PhD diss., Durham University, 2010); Gillian Ray Skyrme, "Being Chinese or Being Different: Chinese Undergraduates' Use of Discourses of Chineseness," *Frontiers of Education in China* 9, no. 3 (2014): 303-326, doi:10.1007/bf03397025; Gillian Ray Skyrme, "Expectations, Emerging Issues and Change for Chinese International Students in A New Zealand University,"(PhD diss., Massey University, 2008); Ling Cao and Ly Thi Tran, "Chinese International Students in Australia: An Insight into Their Help and Information Seeking Manners," *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives* 14, no. 1 (2015).

except for a few studies that have attempted to address issues of Chinese students' development of language capabilities,[8] psychological adaption difficulties,[9] learning adjustment, and integration into a university setting in Germany.[10]

1.3 Significance of this research

Firstly, I would like to understand Chinese students abroad in the framework of identity in mobility. According to Wang, the situation of students is not quite the same as that of migrants: "Chinese students are not migrants." Further, he clearly differentiated a "student" from an "immigrant,"[11] and used the word "migranthood," indicating that some Chinese students place themselves in a sphere between students and settled immigrants.[12] However, while some Chinese students abroad are sojourners who have intentions of eventually returning to China, some students are potential migrants to the host country, and the rest have a more ambivalent attitude toward their plans after their studies abroad. Thus, I agree with Gargano that international students' identities are ambiguous and do not fall within traditional sociological and anthropological paradigms. Their experiences do not fit smoothly into current migration or refugee discourses, nor can they be easily described by single theories of diaspora,

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[8] E.g. Yu Chen, *Verbessern chinesische Studierende ihre Sprechfertigkeit im Deutschen während des Fachstudiums in Deutschland?* (Frankfurt a.M: Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012); Tong Liu, „'Ich Verstehe nur Chinesisch!': Kontrastierung der Chinesischen und Deutschen Phonetik/Phonologie als Basis für die Entwicklung von Lehr- Und Lernmaterialien für Deutschlernende Chinesischer Muttersprache," (Ph.D., Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, 2015); Liang Liu, *Chinesen Lernen Anders!-Lernkulturstandards Chinesischer Deutschlerner unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Wortschatzarbeit* (Hamburg: Kovač, 2012).

[9] E.g. Huiping Guan, „Anpassung und Integration der Chinesischen Studierenden in Deutschland: Eine Untersuchung Anhand des Beispiels an der Universität Bremen," (PhD diss., University of Bremen, 2007).

[10] E.g. Jun Zhou, *Zwischen „Elite Von Morgen" und „Liu Xue La Ji" („Müllstudenten")*(Münster: Verl.-Haus Monsenstein und Vannerdat, 2010); Jiani Zhu, "Academic Adjustment of Chinese Students at German Universities,"(PhD diss., Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2012); Jie Song, "Cultural Experiences of German and Chinese Exchange Students and Implications for A Target Group-Oriented Intercultural Training Program," (PhD diss.,Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, 2009); Jin Sun, *Die Universität als Raum Kultureller Differenzerfahrung: Chinesische Studenten an Einer Deutschen Hochschule* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010); Hanwei Li, "Academic Integration of Mainland Chinese Students in Germany," *Social Inclusion* 5, no. 1 (2017): 80, doi:10.17645/si.v5i1.824.

[11] Gungwu Wang, "Liuxue and Yimin: from Study to Migranthood," in *Beyond Chinatown: New Chinese Migration and the Global Expansion of China*, 1st ed. (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute Asian Studies, 2007), 167; for Research Projects about Chinese Immigrants in Germany, see Maggi Wai-Han Leung, *Chinese Migration in Germany* (Frankfurt am Main: IKO - Verl. für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2004).

[12] Gungwu Wang, "Liuxue and Yimin: from Study to Migranthood," in *Beyond Chinatown: New Chinese Migration and the Global Expansion of China*, 1st ed. (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute Asian Studies, 2007), 167.

transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, second-generation migrants, or return migrants.[13] However, the experiences of international students extend these discourses and could provide a different perspective on international mobility.[14]

Secondly, the complexity of students' formative experiences far from home helps to (re)shape the way they negotiate their sense of self, their roots, and their social connections during their stay overseas and later.[15] As they are in their early or mid-20s, students are also experiencing the process of becoming an adult, or "emerging adulthood."[16] They might start to challenge their convictions from childhood and adolescence, and transform them into a more stable personal viewpoint.[17] As I mentioned above, what has been absent from previous studies is research that has sought to document and comprehend the temporal process of change over time during a stay abroad. Methodologically, quantitative methods have often been used to trace changes, and qualitative studies have tended to approach these questions from a retrospective perspective.[18] In contrast, my research aimed to enable a fruitful dialogue between research and theoretical literature on Chineseness, a sense of belonging, and nationalism and to track student development and change from observations derived from qualitative longitudinal methods to obtain new insights and understanding.

Thirdly, the reason for studying Chinese students' understanding of Chineseness is also related to a bigger topic. Tu suggested that Chineseness could be explored within continuous communication among three symbolic worlds: the first comprises mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, where cultural and ethnic Chinese populations dominate; the second contains Chinese overseas communities scattered around the world, and the third one includes non-Chinese individuals in the intellectual community who bring their understanding of China to their own linguistic and cultural communities.[19]

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[13] See the same problem regarding research about the third culture kid. See Rachel May Cason, "Third Culture Kids': Migration Narratives on Belonging, Identity and Place," (PhD diss., Keele University, 2015).

[14] Terra Gargano, "(Re)Conceptualizing International Student Mobility," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 13, no. 3 (2008): 331-346, doi:10.1177/1028315308322060.

[15] Rachel May Cason, "Third Culture Kids: Migration Narratives on Belonging, Identity and Place," (PhD diss., Keele University, 2015).

[16] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (2000): 469-480, doi:10.1037/0003-066x.55.5.469.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Rachel Thomson and Janet Holland, "Hindsight, Foresight and Insight: The Challenges of Longitudinal Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 6, no. 3 (2003): 234.

[19] Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center," *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (1991): 1-32. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025372.

While these three universes overlap with each other due to globalisation and mobility, there are some Chinese overseas sojourners who temporarily stay abroad or have ambiguous plans to stay abroad; for example, Chinese students abroad are normally excluded or invisible in studies of Chineseness, yet they also possibly contribute to the understanding of Chineseness. Some of these overseas students return to China after their studies, while some of them choose to stay in the host country.[20] No matter what their life choice is, I believe their understanding of Chineseness and their process of identity (re)construction plays an essential part in this discourse, while the diversity of "voices" from the periphery can contribute to the decentring of an essentialist and hegemonic understanding of Chineseness.

As mentioned earlier, in previous research on Chinese students abroad, the understanding of Chineseness has been essentialised; Chinese students have usually been characterised as "Confucian-heritage learners," and the divisions between "Chinese" and "non-Chinese" and "Chinese" and "Western" have been prominent. In this regard, I believe that the study of Chinese students in Germany can offer a useful perspective for understanding the nature of identity (re)constructions in the transcultural context of mobility. This study attempted to avoid oversimplifying the diversity of students' learning experiences away from home and their understanding of self. Therefore, I also aimed to ground concepts such as identity and sense of belonging in my interview partners' understanding of them: as lived and dynamic experiences, instead of strictly defined theoretical abstractions.[21]

1.4 The historical background of Chinese students studying abroad

Etymological speaking, firstly, studying abroad nowadays is usually termed *liuxue* 留学 in Chinese. This is a Japanese loanword from *ryūgaku* 留学, which was first used to refer to young Japanese students who went to China to study and stayed on in the Tang dynasty.[22] Secondly,

[20] For a complete study on the choice of students (not) to become immigrants, see "Wang Gungwu, Liuxue and Yimin: From Study to Migranthood," in *Beyond Chinatown*, ed. Mette Thunø (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2007), 165-180,

[21] Qi Wu, "Motivations and Decision-Making Processes of Mainland Chinese Students for Undertaking Master's Programs Abroad," *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 18, no. 5 (2014): 426-444.

[22] Students who stayed on in China were called *liuxuesheng*, whereas students who went back to Japan after study were termed *Huanxuesheng* 还学生. There was also another relevant Chinese word, "*qujing*," which literally means "to fetch the Buddhist sutras," describing Chinese Buddhist monks who went on pilgrimage to India in order to obtain the sutras in the Tang dynasty. Liu Jilin 刘集林, "Cong Chuyang, Youxue dao Liuxue—Wanqing

liuxue or *ryūgaku* literally means "stay-study." It emphasizes both the element of "study" and the element of "stay." According to Wang, *liuxue* usually alludes to students staying overseas for a relative long period of time, for example around five years or longer, "to receive the fullest possible instruction and master a particular branch of knowledge or acquire a superior profession." On the contrary, activities with shorter time frame, such as "brief visits to institutions of higher learning to take short courses or complete their research projects, or to those who do short stints of teaching" are usually not referred to as *liuxue*.[23]

The history of education abroad among Chinese students can be divided into four stages: 1) education abroad in the late Qing Dynasty (1872-1911), 2) education abroad during the time of the Republic of China (1912 to 1949), 3) education abroad from the establishment of the People's Republic of China to the time of Reform and Opening-Up (1949-1977), and 4) education abroad from after 1977 until now. From 1872 to 1875, the Qing government recruited 120 young male students, with an average age of twelve years old, and sent them to the United States, with the hope that they would later return to China with Western expertise.[24] Despite this attempt, the project only lasted for nine years before it ended in 1881. Following the departure of young children to the United States, the government also started to send students to European countries, such as France and England, in order to seek to achieve "self-improvement." After China' defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894, many students went to Japan to study. After 1908, triggered by the United States' partial repayment of the *Gengzi* indemnity,[25] several groups of young Chinese students were supported to study in the United States and other European countries. After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, students were mostly sent to the Soviet Union and countries with a socialist system in Eastern Europe, between 1949 and 1965. From 1966 to 1976, the number of students who could study

liuxue ciyuankao" 从"出洋"、"游学" 到"留学"——晚清留学词源考 [From "Chuxiang", "Youxue" to "Liuxue"—an etymology study of *liuxue* in the late Qing dynasty], *Guangdong shehui kexue* 广东社会科学, 6 (2007).

[23] Gungwu Wang, "Liuxue and Yimin: From Study to Migranthood," in *Beyond Chinatown: New Chinese Migration and the Global Expansion of China*, 1st ed. (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute Asian Studies, 2007), 167.

[24] Qisheng Wang 王奇生, *Zhongguo liuxuesheng de lishi guiji* 中国留学生的历史轨迹：1872—1949 [The historical track of Chinese students abroad: 1872-1949] (Wuhai: Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe 武汉: 湖北教育出版社 [Hubei Educational Press], 1992).

[25] The *Gengzi* indemnity refers to the compensation for the losses caused by the Boxer Rebellion and the war with the Qing Empire in 1900, as stipulated in the Boxer Protocol, which was signed between the Qing Empire and the Western powers in 1901. In 1908, the U.S. Congress passed a bill to return the excess *Gengzi* Indemnity to China in order to establish the *Gengzi* Indemnity Scholarship Program to educate the young Chinese generation.

abroad decreased dramatically, due to the disruption to education during the period of the Cultural Revolution.

However, it was not until 1985, when the government abolished the procedure of "verification of eligibility to self-financed study abroad" (*zifei chuguo liuxue zige shenhe* 自费出国留学资格审核), that the number of the self-financed students going abroad increased. In 1993, a new policy guideline regarding students studying abroad was implemented. This stated: "[We] support students to study overseas, encourage students to return home, and maintain students' freedom of movement" (*zhichi liuxue, guli huiguo, laiqu ziyou* 支持留学，鼓励回国，来去自由), confirming a more relaxed government attitude towards students going abroad to study.[26]

1.5 Current situation of Chinese students studying abroad

The twenty-first century has witnessed rapid growth in the number of Chinese students going abroad to study. From 1978 to 2018, more than 5 million (585,710,000) students left China to study abroad.[27] In 2017 alone, the Chinese Ministry of Education recorded a total of 608,400 Chinese students who went abroad to pursue further education. Compared with the figure in 2016, it increased 11.7%, and, for the first time, the number exceeded 600,000.[28] Regarding the students' destinations, as of 2016, students chose the United States as their most popular study destination (with 328,547 Chinese students studying there), followed by Australia (97,984), the United Kingdom (94,955), Canada (83,990), and Japan (74,921). Germany (30,259) and France (28,043), as non-English speaking countries in the West, became Chinese students' favourite destinations in continental Europe.[29]

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[26] Kai Jiang 蒋凯, Tieying Xu 徐铁英, "Jindai yilai Zhonguo liuxue jiaoyu de lishi bianqian" 近代以来中国留学教育的变迁 [Historical Evolution of Overseas Education since Modern China], *Daxue kexue jiaoyu* 大学科学教育, 6 (2007): 67-74.

[27] Chinese Ministry of Education, "Statistics on Chinese Students Studying Abroad in 2018, March 27, 2019, http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201903/t20190327_375704.html.)

[28] Chinese Ministry of Education, "2017 Sees Increase in Number of Chinese Students Studying Abroad and Returning after Overseas Studies," April 4, 2018, http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201803/t20180329_331771.html.

[29] Institute of International Education, Project Atlas, "China," accessed March 14, 2019, https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Project-Atlas/Explore-Data/China.

There have been several reasons for this rapid growth, especially at the beginning of the twenty-first century. First of all, contemporary Chinese urban youth have been the main beneficiaries of the material and economic prosperity of China's reform and opening-up. As a result of the sweeping economic reforms that began in the late 1970s, the purchasing power of urban families has greatly increased, and the middle class family characterised by material prosperity and a consumerist lifestyle has gradually grown.[30] With the development of the economy in China, more and more families started to be able to afford living and tuition expenses abroad.[31]

Secondly, due to the one-child policy implemented in China in the late 1970s, the majority of today's urban youth were born as the only child in their family.[32] Many studies have found that these only children are at the heart of the family, and the family usually focuses all of its resources and attention on them.[33] Among these resources, parents and other relatives put high expectations on their only child, especially regarding education.[34] Unlike their parents' generation, who were largely denied access to formal education due to political movements, the vast majority of urban youth today have completed high school education, and many have had the opportunity to study at university, especially after the expansion of higher education enrolment in China since 1999.[35]

Thirdly, this generation of youth in China has its own characteristics: "They are simultaneously materialistic and idealistic, internationalist and nationalist, global and local, apolitical but nationalistic, modern and traditional, blessed with material prosperity and yet under great pressure to strive for greater material wealth, and exposed to an unprecedented range of choices and yet lacking a sense of security[…] In other words, this is a generation of youth that is torn between the traditional and modern, national and international, local and global influences and in search of a direction."[36] Under this context, young Chinese people are more willing to leave their own country in order to explore a wider world of possibility.

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[30] Fengshu Liu, *Urban Youth in China*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 58.

[31] Wolfgang Georg Arlt, "China's Outbound Travel Trends: Parents Sending Their Children to School Overseas," *The Forbes*, 26 June (2016), 16.

[32] On January 1, 2016, the one-child policy was officially halted, and each family is allowed to have two children.

[33] Fengshu Liu, *Urban Youth in China*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 58.

[34] Guangyu Tan, "The One-Child Policy and Privatization of Education in China," *International Education*, 42 no. 1, (2012), http://trace.tennessee.edu/internationaleducation/vol42/iss1/3

[35] Yunxiang Yan, "Little Emperors or Frail Pragmatists? China's 80ers Generation," *Current History* 105(692): (2006), 255–262.

[36] Fengshu Liu, *Urban Youth in China*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 76.

1.6 Chinese students in Germany

The twenty-first century also witnessed a rapid growth in Chinese students coming to Germany to study.[37] Recent figures showed that, in the winter semester of 2017/2018, approximately 36,915 Chinese students registered in German universities, with Chinese students making up the biggest proportion of Germany's international students, accounting for 13.1% of all international students.[38] Apart from some of the general reasons mentioned above, there have been several practical reasons for this:

(1) An educational reform initiative that aimed at synchronising degree structures in Europe, as part of the Bologna process, facilitated the transformation of the traditional German system of Diploma and Magister degrees to a more international system of undergraduate and post-graduate degrees. As a result, the new system became more closely aligned with the Chinese higher education system.[39]
(2) German universities started to offer more study programmes in the English language, attracting more students who did not speak German.
(3) Beginning in 2014, education again became free at German public universities for international students outside the European Union or European Economic Area (EU/EEA).[40] Students are only charged a low semester fee, usually under 500 Euro per semester, which makes education in Germany much more affordable for Chinese students and their families, especially when compared to higher education in other countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom.[41] Thus, unlike Chinese students going to the United States or the United Kingdom, who may come from upper-

[37] Wissenschaft weltoffen, "Chinese Students at German Universities," 2012, http://www.wissenschaftweltoffen.de/archiv_focus/6/1/1?lang=en
[38] Statistisches Bundesamt, "Daten zu Studierenden und Studienanfänger/-innen an deutschen Hochschulen im Wintersemester 2017/2018," https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/BildungForschungKultur/Hochschulen/StudierendeHochschulenEndg.html, accessed March 14, 2019.
[39] Rachel Michael, "The Rise of Chinese Students at German Universities - WENR," (2015), WENR. accessed March 14, 2019. https://wenr.wes.org/2015/10/rise-chinese-students-german-universities.
[40] From 2017, public universities in Baden-Württemberg started to charge international students from non-EU/EEA students 1500 Euro per semester.
[41] Rachel Michael, "The Rise of Chinese Students at German Universities - WENR," (2015), WENR, accessed March 14, 2019, https://wenr.wes.org/2015/10/rise-chinese-students-german-universities.

middle class families, students who choose to study in Germany are more likely to come from lower-middle class or working class families.[42]

1.7 My own experiences as a Chinese student studying abroad

I have been a Chinese student studying abroad for over ten years now, which has been a life-changing experience. In 2008, thanks to a generous scholarship from the United States and China, which supported 150 university students from my hometown of Sichuan after the Sichuan Earthquake that year, I was able to fly to New York and spend my junior year at the State University of New York. Since the programme was launched within a special framework, it only took a month from its initiation to secure students a place at the local university. It took me at least another month to get used to waking up and hearing English conversations with an American accent. The one-year experience in New York was new to me. As a 20-year-old, I was experiencing great challenges daily, including the English language, a new educational system, and different lifestyles. Nevertheless, at the same time, every day was exciting. I remember always taking a camera with me, for every moment was worth being well documented as a means to record and reflect upon my own growth. Even though the programme only lasted one-year, it had a considerable impact on me.

In 2008, I remember how different I felt, being the only Chinese person in attendance when I watched the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympics Games with my new American friends. I also heard stories from fellow Chinese students on campus who did not regard themselves as political at home but lashed out at what they perceived as an anti-China bias in America. For the first time, I was learning to distance myself from my usual "taken-for-granted" Chineseness, in order to reflect upon, as well as explore, what it really meant to me. Therefore, I formed a better understanding about how to place myself in the wider world.

After returning to China, I applied for another scholarship programme from the European Union in 2010. From a list of ten universities in Europe, I chose to spend the last semester of

[42] Xiaoshu Xu, 徐晓书, "Deguo: gongxin jieceng zinü zifei liuxue de shouxuan" 德国，工薪阶层子女自费留学的首选" [Germany: Preferred countries for working-class children to study abroad at their own expense], Sohu goabroad.com, July 15, 2007, http://goabroad.sohu.com/20071115/n253266506.shtml.

my bachelor's degree at Uppsala University in Sweden. After spending a semester there and traveling around Europe, I finally started to realise that the "Western" world was not like its depiction in Hollywood movies, and there was a great difference between Europe and the United States. After returning home, I was admitted to a master's programme at my home university in China, but my exploration of the world as a student did not end there. After finishing my courses, I flew to Germany and studied at Göttingen University as an exchange student in 2011, where I finally decided to carry out my Ph.D. research a few years later.

My experiences of studying abroad led to a journey of transformation in my emerging adulthood, a period I define as being from my early 20s to my early 30s. I felt that my identity as a Chinese person altered considerably. After all, I started to learn more about myself by participating in a new lifestyle and culture while speaking different languages besides my mother tongue. Reflecting on changes enabled me to distance myself and observe the culture I had been born in, as well tremendously expanding my worldview. Therefore, studying and living abroad enabled me to have endless opportunities to learn and adapt, all of which, of course, changed me.

After my year in Germany, I returned to my home university in 2012 and worked as a Chinese language instructor to international students. My experiences communicating with international students was intriguing, inspiring me to gain an understanding of the students' transcultural experiences. After finishing my master's thesis, which focused on international students' Chinese learning experiences at one Chinese university, I considered carrying out an in-depth study focusing on Chinese students' experiences abroad. Therefore, I finally returned to Germany with my doctoral research proposal, hoping to focus on a group of young students from China who had had a thorough education in China before going to Germany to pursue further education. Why did they come to Germany? How would they react to the host environment, and how would they cooperate with it? Most importantly, I wondered what they had been through regarding their self-understanding and identity in Germany. The decision to embark on this longitudinal research project reflected my own personal development and search for a sense of belonging in the globalised world. However, I am also aware that it is important for a researcher not to project their own ideas and experiences onto their participants. Therefore, I have been very conscious about my position as a researcher. In short, my personal experiences have led me, both personally and academically, to become highly interested in this research topic.

1.8 Chapter overview

Chapter Two offers different perspectives on theories about identity and a sense of belonging. Chapter Three explains the research method I applied and further discusses my position as a researcher (being both an "insider" and "outsider" throughout the research process). Chapter Four begins by exploring different understandings about nation and nationalism, and then focuses on Chinese nationalism and the special political education of the young generation, as well as its impacts on them. This provides a critical background for the Chinese students I studied in this dissertation research. Chapter Five presents my participants' motivations and expectations regarding studying in Germany prior to their arrival in the country. Chapter Six offers a close picture of the experiences of the participants within the Chinese community, with German locals, and with other internationals in Germany and their social contact development. Chapter Seven presents the changes that the students experienced, including everyday life habits, political views, perceptions regarding Germany and China, etc. Chapter Eight focuses on three case studies that aim to provide readers with more details and nuances from a biographical perspective about students' trajectories. From these three cases, I form three types, and make a comparison. Finally, I conclude by discussing the present research's shortcomings and future research directions, as well as my personal reflections.

Chapter 2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Conceptualizing identity

To study changes in the identity of my Chinese interview partners who continued to pursue their higher education in Germany, I needed, first of all, to define how I understood the concept of identity, because a satisfactory investigation of the students' identity changes required an exploration of the more substantive question "What is identity?" I am cognizant of the fact that identity as an umbrella concept has incorporated diverse, occasionally also conflicting, facets as this concept has been quite often utilised as both an analytical term and in everyday use.[43] Although fully acknowledging that the concept of identity might have been "stripped" brutally by many post-modern critics, it is not my ambition to dive into this discourse and abandon the term promptly. Instead, in this chapter, I will seek to unpack various aspects of this term and construct a relevant theoretical framework for my own research project. This framework serves as "sensitizing concepts" and provides starting points for me to start the investigation.[44]

There are different approaches to understanding identity. For centuries, philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists have been seeking ways to understand it. The concept was first imported from philosophy into the social sciences to deal with the problems of "psychosocial" identity, as Erik H. Erikson coined and developed the concept of "identity crisis."[45] Since then, the sociological understanding of identity has gone through different periods.[46] It has undergone a long evolution from being understood as something solid and essential to something constructed and built according to specific conditions. As Hall pointed out, identities are

> "[…] produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference

[43] According to Brubaker and Cooper, an analytical concept refers to a more flexible and fluid way to view the concept of identity theoretically, and a practical concept refers to a more fixed understanding of identity in everyday use. See Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 4.
[44] Herbert Blumer, "What is Wrong with Social Theory?", *American Sociological Review* 19, no. 1 (1954): 3; Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods," in *Strategies for Qualitative Inquiry*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 249–291.
[45] Erik H Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis,* 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968).
[46] For the history of the change of usage of "identity," see Brubaker and Cooper, 2-4.

and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity—an identity in its traditional meaning."[47]

Instead of thinking of identity as "a kind of fixed point of thought and being, a ground of action [...] a 'true self,'" it is more like "a process" and "an ambivalent point."[48] However, while acknowledging that there are many anti-essentialist, deconstructive, and postmodern critiques against an essential concept of identity, Ang also pointed out an important paradox of these approaches to the understanding of identity: on the one hand, constructivist scholars claim that identity is a social construct that is not "natural"; on the other hand, identity is also "felt" as something "natural" and "inevitable" and therefore easily taken for granted: "No matter how convinced we [theorists] are, theoretically, that identities are constructed, not 'natural', invented not given, always in process and not fixed at the level of experience and common sense, identities are generally expressed, and mobilized politically precisely because they *feel* natural and essential."[49]

This was also echoed by Brubacker and Cooper, who believed that the concept mixed a "category of analysis" and a "category of practice." Scholars have often rejected the notion of fixed identity as an analytical term, while at the same time treating it as a practical category.[50] While the concept has been poorly defined and overused, Fearon retreated from ordinary everyday language and the discourse of the social sciences to provide an accurate definition of identity, a concept widely used by but rarely defined by many researchers.[51] As Brubaker and Cooper said, identity "tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity)."[52]

In Hall's words, identity is "an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all." However, Hall did not explain what key

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[47] Kumarini Silva, "Brown: From Identity to Identification," *Cultural Studies* 24, no. 2 (2010): 167-182, doi:10.1080/09502380903541597; Stuart Hall, "'Introduction: who needs "identity"?'", in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, (Ed.) Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, (London: Sage Publications:1996), 4.

[48] Hall, Stuart, "Ethnicity: Identity and Difference," *Radical America* 23, no.4 (1989), 9-20.

[49] Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 151.

[50] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 4.

[51] James Fearon, "What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?", Unpublished manuscript (Stanford University, California:1999), November 3.

[52] Brubaker and Cooper, a "strong" understanding suggests that it is marked by "sameness over time or across person" whereas a "weak" understanding sees it as "multiple, unstable, in flux, contingent, fragmented, constructed, negotiated." 10-11.

questions were necessary to conceptualize identity. To clarify the many different meanings that can be encompassed by identity, Brubacker and Cooper attempted to classify it into different types and finally differentiated between five "key uses" of identity. Similar to Lehmann's approach, I will quote three of them in full since they apply distinctly to the problematic formations of identities related to my research as well[53]:

2. Understood as a specifically collective phenomenon, identity denotes a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group or category. This may be understood objectively (as sameness "in itself") or subjectively (as an experienced, felt, or perceived sameness). This sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action. This usage is found especially in the literature on social movement; on gender; and on race, ethnicity, and nationalism. In this usage, the line between "identity" as a category of analysis and as a category of practice is often blurred.

3. Understood as a core aspect of (individual or collective) "selfhood" or as a fundamental condition of social being, "identity" is invoked to point to something allegedly deep, basic, abiding or foundational. This is distinguished from more superficial, accidental, fleeting, or contingent aspects or attributes of the self, and is understood as something to be valued, cultivated, supported, recognized, and preserved. This usage is characteristic of certain strands of the psychological (or psychologizing) literature, especially as influenced by Erikson, though it also appears in the literature on race, ethnicity, and nationalism. Here too the practical and analytical uses of "identity" are frequently conflated.
[...]

5. Understood as the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, "identity" is invoked to highlight the unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary "self". This usage is found especially in the literature influenced by Foucault, post-structuralism, and postmodernism. In somewhat different form, without the post-structuralist trappings, it is also found in certain strands of the literature on ethnicity—notably in "situationist" or "contextualist" accounts of ethnicity.[54]

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[53] Sonja Lehman, "Transnational Identities," in *Strangers, Migrants, Exiles: Negotiating Identity in Literature*, ed. Frauke Reitemeier (Göttingen: Universitätsdrucke Göttingen, 2012): 281-345.
[54] Brucker and Cooper, 7-8.

Indeed, as Lehman has remarked, although these three definitions attempted to describe what "identity" is, it seems that some of the descriptions were quite different or even contradictive. The second definition argues that "identity" is something that always remains the same and hardly ever changes, but the third definition already negates this to some extent by stating that only certain aspects never change. The fifth definition, on the other hand, defines "identity" as something that is not stable at all, but rather an ever-changing process, so that from one moment to the next there seems to be little or no sameness, which clearly contradicts the second definition.[55]

The problems mentioned above also applied directly to my Chinese interview partners because, no matter how the concept of "Chineseness" may vary culturally, ethnically, or politically, "Chinese" as a national container was still viewed, or "felt naturally," as a legitimate concept by many of my research participants. In other words, the students' understanding of what it is to be "Chinese" varied and changed, but "Chinese" itself served as an identity category for them. Identity as a "practical category" feels natural and essential, and therefore it is "reality" for many. Therefore, disagreeing with Probyn, who preferred to abandon this concept,[56] I decided to still adopt the concept of identity as an explanatory framework and I did this deliberately, even though I fully understand that the concept of identity has been constantly challenged and criticized. I made this choice because, agreeing with Hall, I am convinced that the concept of identity still has explanatory ability when we acknowledge both its "necessity" and its "impossibility."[57] More specifically, in my study, one needs to be fully aware that the concept of "identity" served both as a "analytical term" for the researcher and as a "source term" or "practical category" for the interviewed students, but there were potential differences between these two uses of the term.

My goal in this study was to go beyond descriptions and seek explanations not only for the question of *why* these young Chinese students identified with their country and exactly *what* it was that they identified with, but also, more specifically to my interests, after these young Chinese students had experiencing the *Other* for several years while studying and living abroad (in this study, in Germany), whether their attachment toward China had been enhanced,

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[55] Sonja Lehman, "Transnational Identities," in *Strangers, Migrants, Exiles: Negotiating Identity in Literature*, ed. Frauke Reitemeier (Göttingen: Universitätsdrucke Göttingen, 2012): 281-345.
[56] Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 19.
[57] Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), 16.

diminished, or maybe transformed; if so, *how* and *why* did this happen, and *how* did it impact their understanding of themselves and others?

Due to the problem of identity above, I needed to construct a theoretical apparatus to investigate a cohort of young students who were born in the late 1980s and early 1990s in China and came to Germany in their early and middle twenties. Since there was no single unified theory that adequately addressed all relevant aspects of my thesis, I attempted to construct a strategic bricolage of a framework to navigate and explain the (possible) identity change or development among my interview partners.

Brubaker and Cooper suggested three alternatives to "identity" that capture aspects that are generally covered by the term. Thus identity can stand for processes of (1) "identification and categorization," which encompass (2) "self-understanding and social location" and "commonality" and (3) "connectedness" and "groupness".[58] While identity can be conceptualized from a variety of dimensions, Grossberg proposed a framework from cultural studies in which he highlighted three logics of identity: *a logic of difference*, *a logic of individuality*, *and a logic of temporality*.[59]

Combining both Brubaker and Cooper's three "break-down" alternatives of "identity" and Grossberg's three logics of "identity," I was inspired to conceptualize my understanding of identity using a framework of five dimensions that had particular relevance to my research project:

(1) Identity and collectivity, with which I wanted to discuss the relationship between structure and agency (or collectivity and individuality) within the concept of identity. In this way, I could address the importance of social categorization, especially national identity, such as how a nation state influences and constructs an individual's identity. This was relevant to my own research because the Chinese students who had come to Germany had been educated within official Chinese narratives, and they had grown up internalising these narratives.

(2) Identity as a narrative biographical work, in which identity is perceived as the result of individuals constructing and retaining continuity and consistency through changing

[58] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 14-20.
[59] Lawrence Grossberg, "Identity and Cultural Studies-is that All There Is?" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Paul Du Gay and Stuart Hall (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi, Sage:1996): 87–107.

circumstances. Chinese students came to Germany, and they needed to adapt and change in order to make sense of things that they had learnt in China while learning new things in Germany.

(3) Identity and the *Other*, which echoes *the logic of difference* and how *Otherness* is constructed and transformed. In this part I wanted to focus on the difference and Otherness manifested, reconstructed, and transformed during the students' stay in Germany.

(4) Identity and belonging, echoing "connectedness," "groupness," and "commonality," and examining how people feel they belong to each other. I wanted to focus on how Chinese students reconceived their sense of connectedness and attachment while in Germany.

(5) Transcultural identity, which specifically targeted my research group's transcultural experiences and their potential long-lasting effect on individuals' values and worldviews.

These five aspects were not completely mutually exclusive; instead, they were interrelated, mutually supportive, and sometimes even overlapping. My research uncovered several themes around the reconstruction of identity, which included otherness, belonging, and self-development, and how these ideas relate to the ideas of strangeness, nation, and transculturality. In examining individuals' life histories and stories, I sought to provide systematic empirical evidence about contemporary identity practices and to develop an understanding of the processes of identity changes.

2.2 Identity and collectivity

From a sociological perspective, identity is believed to be greatly shaped by structural constraints and incentives. Social structures can include political and economic systems as well as social discourses; identities are negotiated within the constraints and affordances of these social structures and institutions. For example, some studies have suggested that both formal schooling and informal family settings can play a role in identity formation, and that formal school education can have a substantial impact on the formation of national identity amongst students; family relations and parental communication patterns that include a consistent

expression of political viewpoints in the parent-child context provide a model for the child to emulate in the process of identity formation.[60] Maurice Halbwachs emphasized the importance of "social frame" to understand "collective memory.". As Assmann said, "We must not forget that human beings do not live in the first person singular only, but also in various formats of the first person plural."[61] A social frame is understood as either an implicit or explicit structure of "shared concern, value, experiences, narratives,"[62] and the term social identity refers to an individual's standing(s) in a particular social structure.

To some extent, identity is always bound up with the collective or group, and it is founded on the collective past, or more accurately, the collective memorized past. By remembering, a certain group is constructed with collective identity. Especially for a national identity, national memory is materialized in various sites such as places, objects, events, etc.[63] For the Chinese students in my research who had been given official education from the state, the internalization of the state influence had contributed to their formation of a relatively strong Chinese identity. I will discuss this at length in Chapter Four, where I discuss how Chinese identity has been constructed amongst the young generation who were raised in post-1990s China and were subject to the Patriotic Education Campaign, which deliberately aims to foster patriotic sentiment among Chinese youth and shape their state-bound (or even Party-bound) national identity.

Self-agency in shaping identity

While social construction plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' identity, self-agency is also important in simultaneously constructing one's identity. Therefore, it is unreasonable to view identity as an ascribed state that is beyond the control of the individual agent. In contrast, the positive agentic response is to develop strategies for dealing with these effects in order to maintain some sense of direction and meaning, and to take initiative in one's own personal

[60] Gerald R. Adams, "Identity and Political Socialization," *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 1985, no. 30 (1985): 61-77, doi:10.1002/cd.23219853006.
[61] Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," *Social Research*, 75 no.1 (Spring 2008): 51
[62] Ibid. 51-52.
[63] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7-24, doi:10.2307/2928520.

development.[64] Individuals have agency to take control and participate in the identity shaping process. The "structure–agency controversy," a long-standing debate in the social sciences, concerns the extent to which behaviour is the result of external, social, political, and economic forces, or the extent to which it is driven by internal, individual, wilful potentials.[65] I therefore would like to suggest that identity is both an individual and a social phenomenon.[66] There is a complicated interaction between these two. Presumably, social identities are formed differently in various relational models: they can be ascribed, achieved, or managed. The first means assigned according to some inherited status; the second is used in the sociological sense, in which social status is achieved; and the third refers to reflexively and strategically integrating oneself into a group of strangers by creating the right impression and gaining their permission to join the group.[67]

The discussion about identity has stressed the relationship between individuals and the social institutions and structures with which they interact. Individuals are often affected at the level of social identification by cultural forces and societal norms, and are under differing degrees of strain to conform to the current "molds" of identification generated by these effects.[68] To order to ensure their own psychological and physical security, individuals seek to internalise and follow the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of the community in which they reside.[69] The ongoing and persistent process of internalisation of the social environment leads to the construction of individual identities within the social dimension. However, as mentioned above, individual identity also has agency to react to influence from the social structure. From a psychological perspective, the formation of identity can be conceptualised as an ongoing psychosocial process in which different features of the self are internalised, labelled, valued, and organised.[70] Individuals ought to find a balance between the guidelines of their collective identification and the individuality and idiosyncrasies of their experience of life. The identity

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[64] James E. Cote and Charles G Levine, *Identity, Formation, Agency, and Culture*, 1st ed. (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers, 2002), 424.
[65] James E. Cote and Charles G Levine, *Identity, Formation, Agency, And Culture*, 1st ed. (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers, 2002), 9.
[66] Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, *Identity Theory*,1st ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[67] James E. Cote, "Sociological Perspectives on Identity Formation: The Culture–Identity Link and Identity Capital," *Journal of Adolescence* 19, no. 5 (1996): 417-428, 421.
[68] James E. Cote and Charles G Levine, *Identity, Formation, Agency, And Culture*, 1st ed. (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers, 2002), 9.
[69] Hüsamettin İnaç and Feyzullah Ünal, "The Construction of National Identity in Modern Times: Theoretical Perspective," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3, no. 11 (2013): 223-232.
[70] Charles Levine, "Introduction: Structure, Development, And Identity Formation," *Identity* 3, no. 3 (2003): 191-195, doi:10.1207/s1532706xid0303_01.

of the individual is partially dependent on the group to which he or she refers, and affiliation with such communities is part of the self-conception of the person.[71]

Therefore, it is interesting to observe individuals who have internalised one type of social identity when they move to a different or sometimes even contradictory environment. How do they "manage" their identity in a new culture and social environment? This leads to the second aspect of "identity": its narrative characteristics.

2.3 Changing identity and biographical work

Biographical studies are concerned with a constructive approach to life history, which differs from an understanding of identity as something static and inflexible.[72] Identity can be regarded as a process of becoming and is conceptualized as something constantly under (re)construction in this framework. In the context of biographical research, the concept of "identity" is usually replaced by the concept of "biography" or "biographical construction."[73]

More explicitly, researchers who take a biographical approach begin by recognizing identity as a heterogeneous, shifting, polyphonic, ephemeral, cross-cultural, and dynamic structure.[74] Identity is not a given or lasting characteristic of a person. As I mentioned, identity is built on both both individual agency and social construction. However, it can also be seen as a discourse and social construct created by one's attempt to establish and maintain a consistent self-definition in the form of a story.[75] Identity formation is both a lifelong process and a recurring daily task that includes efforts to generate coherence through interconnectedness in life.[76] In

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[71] Kwok Bun Chan, *Chinese Identities, Ethnicity and Cosmopolitanism* (London: Routledge, 2009), xiv.
[72] Ursula Apitzsch and Irini Siouti, "Biographical Analysis as an Interdisciplinary Research Perspective in the Field of Migration Studies" (2007), 5 https://www.york.ac.uk/res/researchintegration/Integrative_Research_Methods/Apitzsch%20Biographical%20Analysis%20April%202007.pdf. (
[73] Fischer-Rosenthal, Wolfram,"Melancholie der Identität und dezentrierte biographische Selbstbeschreibung," BIOS, *Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung und Oral History*, 12, no. 2 (1999): 143-168.
[74] Giorgos Tsiolis, "Biographical Constructions and Transformations: Using Biographical Methods for Studying Transcultural Identities," *Papers Revista de Sociologia* 97, (2012): 113-127.
[75] Armin Nassehi and Georg Weber, "Zur einer Theorie Biographischer Identität. Epistemologische und Systemtheoretische Argumente," BIOS, *Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung und Oral History*, 3, no. 2 (1990): 153-187; Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal, "Melancholie der Identität und dezentrierte biographische Selbstbeschreibung," BIOS, *Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung und Oral History*, 12 no.2, (1999): 143-168.
[76] Peter Alheit, "Identität oder „Biographizität"? Beiträge der neueren sozial- und erziehungswissenschaftlichen Biographieforschung zu einem Konzept der Identitätsentwicklung", in *Subjekt – Identität – Person?* ed. Griese

other words, by constructing a consistent life story, individuals can interconnect the very different and contradictory parts of their lives. Thus, the element of "identity" is conceptualised as a consequence of constructing and maintaining continuity and coherence in a constantly changing environment.[77] "Just as the past is constituted out of the present and the anticipated future, [...] the biographical narratives provide information on the narrator's present as well as about his/her past and perspectives for the future."[78]That is, identity is narrative, and it is narratively built ("narrative identity").[79] Tsiolis discussed the results of the biographical narrative approach in a study of fluid, ephemeral, and cross-cultural identities.[80]

However, within the framework of biographical studies, the understanding of identity as a heterogeneous and shifting construction does not necessarily coincide with the postmodern scepticism of a fractured self, a scepticism that glorifies the instantaneous expression of the pseudo-coherence of the narrative text as inherently ephemeral and unstable.[81] It seems to me that the postmodern sceptical approach rejects the slightest possibility of identity consistency. Under to the framework of narrative identity, however, individuals could possibly ensure a consistent comprehension of who they are, regardless of the plural and contradictory nature of identity.[82] Thus, this consistent self-understanding is neither predetermined nor simply guaranteed by the reality that one belongs to a collective; it is more of an individual achievement in that it relies on the individual's ability to create a coherent narrative of self by

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Birgit (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften:2010); Kerstin Hein, *Hybride Identitäten: Bastelbiografien im Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Lateinamerika und Europa* (Bielefeld, Transcript: 2006).

[77] Ursula Apitzsch and Irini Siouti, "Biographical Analysis as an Interdisciplinary Research Perspective in the Field of Migration Studies," (2007), 5, https://www.york.ac.uk/res/researchintegration/Integrative_Research_Methods/Apitzsch%20Biographical%20Analysis%20April%202007.pdf.

[78] Gabrielle Rosenthal, "Biographical Research," in *Qualitative Research Practice*, ed. Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jay Gubrium and David Silverman (London, Sage: 2004), 50.

[79] Peter Alheit, "Identität oder „Biographizität"? Beiträge der neueren sozial- und erziehungswissenschaftlichen Biographieforschung zu einem Konzept der Identitätsentwicklung", in *Subjekt – Identität – Person?* ed. Griese Birgit (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften:2010); Gabriele Lucius-Hoene and Arnulf Deppermann, "Narrative Identity Empiricized: A Dialogical and Positioning Approach to Autobiographical Research Interviews," *Narrative Inquiry*, 10 no.1 (2000):199-222; Dan P.McAdams, *Stories We Live by: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (New York, William Morrow and Company:1993); William L. Randall, *The Stories We Are*: *An Essay on Self-creation* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press:1995).

[80] Giorgos Tsiolis, "Biographical Constructions and Transformations: Using Biographical Methods for Studying Transcultural Identities," *Papers. Revista De Sociologia* 97, no. 1 (2012): 114.

[81] Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf, (eds.) *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[82] See the concept of "late-modernity" in Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* ed. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, and Kenneth Thompson (Wiley-Blackwell:1996), 277.

mixing and interlinking diverse and paradoxical facets and perspectives in the form of a life story.[83]

Thus, I agree with Alheit's notion of "biographicity" *(Biographizität)* or "biographical work"[84] to profile this process of developing identity in biographical analysis research. The term refers to people's effort to account for their own biographical experience in relation to identity, self-image, behaviour, actions taken, etc. The quality of this work and the effort that follows depends on the context of the individual's experience and its collective significance.[85]

Alheit argued that individuals in modern society will have engage in "biographical work" to generate their biographies ("doing biography") and to make sense of the episodes of their lives.[86] This allows them to digest unexpected and even subversive experiences based on their previous biographical experiences through what Tsiolis called an "appropriation process." However, this process does not end with the current experiences, but enables a reinterpretation of past events, and therefore is bilateral: the crystallized biological understanding enlightens fresh experiences, but, in turn, the latter can lead to transformed retroactive versions of previous experience.[87]

Biographical identity also helps to approach the identities of people in mobility (not necessarily only immigrants, but international students abroad too) by rethinking the concept of identity as "transition, always producing itself through the combined process of being and becoming."[88] As Mercer pointed out, identity is an issue only when it is in crisis, when something perceived as settled and consistent is replaced by an experience of suspicion and ambiguity.[89] Chinese

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[83] Wolf-Dietrich Bukow and Susanne Spindler, "Die biographische Ordnung der Lebensgeschichte: Eine einführende Diskussion," in *Biographische Konstruktionen im multikulturellen Bildungsprozess*, ed. Wolf-Dietrich Bukow, Markus Ottersbach, Elisabeth Tuider and Erol Yildiz, *Individuelle Standortsicherung im globalisierten Alltag* (Wiesbaden, VS Verlag: 2006):19-35.

[84] Peter Albeit, "Die biographische Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit- Überlegungen zur Biographizität des Sozialen," in *Biographische Sozialisation*, ed.Erika Hoerning (Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius, 2000), 257-307.

[85] Kaja Kazmierska, "Identity, the Sense of Belonging and Biographical Closure," in *Ethnicity, Belonging and Biography: Ethnographical and Biographical Perspectives,* ed. Gabriele Rosenthal, Artur Bogne (Münster, LIT, 2009): 100.

[86] Alheit, 2005.

[87] Giorgos Tsiolis, "Biographical Constructions and Transformations: Using Biographical Methods for Studying Transcultural Identities," *Papers Revista de Sociologia* 97, (2012): 113-127.

[88] Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space and Identity* (Oxford: Berg: 2000), 2. For the use of the biographical research in the field of transnational migration studies, see, among others, Ursula Apitzsch and Irini Siouti, "Transnational Biographies," in *Zeitschrift für Qualitative Forschung*, 15 (2014): 11-23.

[89] Kobena Mercer, "Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart,1990), 43-71. 43,

students who come to Germany to study and live, on the one hand, will be encountering a new cultural world; on the other hand, they also have more opportunities to obtain or to receive new information about China. The new local cultural world plus new information about the home country are full of potential uncertainties, differences, and sometimes even conflicts which might urge the Chinese students to relocate themselves in the host society as well as reconceptualize their understanding of Chineseness due to "the loss of a stable 'sense of self.'"[90]

As mentioned above, identity is, to some extent, subject to frequent changes and therefore fluid.[91] Although individuals may be inclined to minimize ambiguity and strategize for a sense of personal coherence, changes in identity are considered an essential component of a biography. The shift, however, is usually processive. Critical events constitute turning points and mark the changes. These moments in a biography allow the individual to see a change and lead to the discovery and validation of new elements of the self.[92] The biographical profile of individuals in mobility produces a number of key events that reveal the impact of their experience on their identity.

In short, individuals' previous or basic biographical experiences and the knowledge they accumulate over the course of their lives are the "biographical resources" with which they transform their biographical identities. Identity, as Hall famously put it, involves the constant production and reproduction of one's work in a continuous process of formation that involves being and becoming.[93] This process is particularly evident in the experiences of the Chinese students interviewed in Germany in this study. For the Chinese students abroad, their biographical resources included their education and family history back home. Being Chinese might seldom have been a prominent issue until they lived in Germany, a move which could have changed their understanding of being Chinese. By adjusting their "biographical resources" from growing up in China, these young Chinese students were able to integrate new experiences, sometimes even "unsought" ones, in Germany and accomplish a consistent narration of themselves and their understanding as Chinese people in Germany. It is only by examining the life histories of individuals, the social and historical contexts in which they

[90] Stuart Hall, "The question of cultural Identity," in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, and Kenneth Thompson (Malden, MA:Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), 597.
[91] Anselm Strauss, *Mirror and masks: the search of identity* (New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers: 2009).
[92] Ibid., p.93.
[93] Hall 1990, p.402.

acquired their lived experiences, and the ways in which the possibilities and structural constraints of biography interact with one another that one can navigate the identity work of a person.[94] The deeper the change, the more complex the biographical work that has to be conducted in order to integrate one's experience into a somewhat cohesive totality. Dealing with the fragile aspects of personal identity is thus a complex and long-term process.[95]

However, this process of identity change, or biographical work, should be seen not only as a process of accommodating to changes in the social and cultural environment. It is also a positive device for individuals to position themselves socially in the world.[96] Each biographical self-presentation involves finding one's position in a system of power relations and finding belonging in a system full of differences and contradictions, which brings us to the next aspect of identity.

2.4. Identity and Otherness

First of all, I would like to make a distinction between difference and otherness. To some extent, otherness is based primarily on binary logic, whereas difference can be relatively more open. I agree with Staszak that *othering* is transforming difference into otherness, and thereby creating and in-group and out-group.[97] To some extent, difference is not necessarily the essential ingredient in forming an identity, but otherness is. Dichotomy becomes constitutive difference and the other is measured by the demarcation. I used the word "demarcation" instead of "negativity" because not every representation produced by the mechanism of othering has overt negative connotations. This demarcation seems essential in terms of defining an "identity" because it seems quite difficult to clearly answer questions like "What is it?" or " Who am I?", but it seems a bit easier to give some answers to "What is it NOT?" or "Who am I NOT?" In other words, othering as a mechanism helps to shape one's identity. Identity is

[94] Giorgos Tsiolis, "Biographical Constructions and Transformations: Using Biographical Methods for Studying Transcultural Identities," *Papers Revista de Sociologia* 97, (2012): 113-127.

[95] Kaja Kazmierska, "Migration Experiences and Changes of Identity. The Analysis of a Narrative," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 4 no.3, Art. 21, (2003).

[96] See Rom Harré and Luk Van Langenhove, eds., *Positioning Theory: Moral Contexts of Intentional Action* (Malden, Blackwell:1999); Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré, "Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 20 (1), (1990), 43-63.

[97] Jean-Francois Staszak, "Other/otherness," in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. Rob Kitchen and Nigel Thrift (Oxford: Elsevier Science, 2008).

a social phenomenon that begins the process of identity formation through interaction with or against the other. As Zhang put it, the self is always related to the other, and nothing can be defined by itself unless it is distinguished from what it is not.[98] The self is given identity through the often-negative attribution of characteristics to the other. As Hall put it: "Identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself."[99] In other words, every version of the "other" is a construction of a "self."[100] In short, identity is, to some extent, defined by the other. I agree with Bell that the self and the other should be seen as part of a unity, for one cannot exist without the other, and the creation of one usually takes place within the creation of the other.[101]

Furthermore, "difference" refers to physical entities, but "otherness" is related to an asymmetry of power. Power here does not necessarily refer to economic or military power, etc., because it is not a problem of the power per se, but of the asymmetry. Kitchin and Thrift believed that asymmetry in power relationships is central to the construction of *otherness*, where the Self is the dominant and hegemonic "in-power" entity and the other is the alternative minority.[102] Lister defined othering as the process of distinction and division through which the line between "us" and "them" is drawn, and through which social distance is established and maintained.[103] Since identity is formed in part by the recognition or non-recognition, and frequently misrecognition, of others, it can lead to individuals feeling damaged or distorted in their identity, if the people or society around them reflect their own limiting images back to them.[104]

If identity is marked by difference and otherness, then I am interested in how differences and otherness are represented and negotiated. In my research, the way in which the images the Chinese students had of themselves and the images their German counterparts had of them were manifested, represented, and negotiated became highly relevant. As Assmann correctly

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[98] Longxi Zhang, *Mighty Opposites* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 25.
[99] Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity" in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System* ed. Athony D. King (London: Macmillan,1997), 19-39.
[100] James Clifford, Writing Culture (Berkeley: University of California press, Clifford, 1986), 23.
[101] Marissa Sonnis-Bell, *At the Interface/Probing the Boundaries.*
[102] Jean-Francois Staszak, "Other/otherness" in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift (Oxford: Elsevier, 2009), 2.
[103] Ruth Lister, *Poverty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 101.
[104] Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism And "The Politics of Recognition*," 1st ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 25.

pointed out, one's experiences of oneself are always mediated, while only experiences of others are direct: "contact with others also entails contact with ourselves. [...] It is an awareness of oneself that at the same time involves awareness of the expectations of others."[105]

In this study, I was interested in understanding how these Chinese students came to the awareness of "we" or of an identity through inevitable exposure to another culture and interaction with German counterparts. The speakers in this study were exposed to some of the confining images of China mirrored by their counterparts in Germany. At the same time, these students had the opportunity to examine their own understanding of Germany as the "other," which, in return, helped them to reconceptualise themselves in a more complicated way. Young Chinese students who come to Western societies may find many misconceptions or misinterpretations of China that result from the traditional repertoire of cultural concepts in the West. Due to the lack of a better distinction, I will continue with this ambiguous terminology of the "West," which is more than a geographical term but is used loosely to refer to the developed world.[106]

Although it is not my intention to fall into the trap of generalizing the difference between China and the West, it is almost impossible to overlook the elephant in the room that represents the way that people from these two cultures imagine or have imagined each other. Mackerras has presented and analysed Western images of China from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to the late 1980s.[107] This work was largely inspired by postcolonial literary and cultural theorists such as Edward Said, who in his seminal work *Orientalism* designated the "other" as a form of cultural projection. According to Said, the strategy of Orientalism relies on a flexible (Western) positional advantage that places Westerners in a series of possible relationships with Oriental people, without ever losing their relative upper hand.[108]

As Said argued, the Orient was largely a European invention. The East represents the "other" with which the West can identify, and it is indeed a conceptual given in the process of Western self-understanding and an image built up in that formation, just like the West itself.[109]

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[105] Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 116.
[106] Longxi Zhang, "The Myth of the Other: China in The Eyes of The West," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (1988): 108-131, doi:10.1086/448476.
[107] Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[108] Edward Wadie Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage books, 1994).
[109] Ibid.

Although by "the Orient" Said meant the Middle East, what he said could also be applied to the Far East, including China. The image of China in the eyes of the West has been shaped throughout history to represent values that are different from those of the West. China and other places, such as India, Africa, and the Islamic East, have at one time been the antithesis of the West as either an idealized utopia, a seductive exotic dreamland, or a land of perpetual stagnation, spiritual purity, and ignorance.[110] This sense of exotic mystery and exotic beauty is also reflected in the Chinoiserie that was popular in the West in the 18th century; or even today, Chinese women are sometimes still presented as a symbol of the exotic. Thus, according to Said, the imaginary boundary between the East and the West set the West and the East within "a fundamental polarity."[111]

In recent times, images of China and their framing in Western media discourse and political debates have also been constantly changing, depending on international political winds and the immediate domestic concerns of each country. Through these practices, however, those representations that embody the characteristics of "Chineseness" and re-affirm Western ideas have been resurrected, reinforced, and magnified; relying heavily on these codes to articulate what China is fails to demonstrate the complexity and specificity, if any, of Chinese reality.

On the other hand, China also has a long history of "othering" the Western world. In contemporary China, the dichotomy of China-the West still appears to be a work in progress, which suggests that the Chinese have also been constructing their perception of the other and of the West.[112] I will further discuss the images of the West in pre-modern China in Chapter Four.

It is worth noting, however, that if identity is defined solely by the "other," the unique characteristics and otherness dimensions of the identified may be consistently magnified and emphasized at the expense of the commonalities of both parties. Such overemphasis will likely lead to differences, contradictions, and even hostility, as well as denial and even stigmatization of the Other.[113] The tendency to discuss identity in terms of difference I mentioned above bears

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[110] Longxi Zhang, "The Myth of The Other: China in The Eyes of The West," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (1988): 108-131, doi:10.1086/448476, 128.
[111] Longxi Zhang, "The Myth of The Other: China in The Eyes of The West," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (1988): 108-131, doi:10.1086/448476, 110.
[112] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 113.
[113] Hüsamettin İnaç and Feyzullah Ünal, "The Construction of National Identity in Modern Times: Theoretical Perspective," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3, no.11 (June 2013): 224.

the potential risk of essentializing difference; it therefore ignores the other side of identity and excludes the identification of commonalities among various forms of Other. It seems fair to consider identity as simultaneously including "sameness" or belonging to a group as well as "differing" because othering and belonging are mutually constitutive components of identity. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate a dialogical relationship between sameness and difference, and between belonging and othering, which leads to the following aspect of identity.

2.5 Identity and Belonging

Identity and a sense of belonging are inevitably interrelated; as Loader and Probyn believed, the questions of "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong" are never separable.[114] Turning to the concept of belonging can lead the focus to the ways individuals and groups want to belong and to become,[115] while it also leads us to see "narratives of identity as part of the longing to belong, as constituted by the desire for an identity, rather than surfacing from an already constituted identity."[116]According to a "belongingness hypothesis" by Baumeister and Leary, everyone has the need, or borrowing Probyn's word, the "desire," to belong.[117] As Baumeister and Leary have argued, the "need to belong," as a basic human motivation, is a universal drive to develop and maintain at least a minimum number of enduring, positive, significant interpersonal relationships.[118] However, similar to the paradox of the concept of identity, the moment one begins to actively contemplate the concept of belonging, the naturalness and authenticity of the concept begins to be challenged, as belonging has a "taken-for-granted" character.[119] In order to understand belonging better, I turned to Yuval-Davis and Antonisch for a useful conceptual framework.

Yuval-Davis has drawn a clear distinction between belonging (an emotional sense of home and security) and the politics of belonging. She believes that three analytical aspects constitute belonging: *social locations*, *identifications*, and *emotional attachments*, as well as *ethical and*

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[114] Loader, I. "Policing, Recognition, and Belonging" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 605, (2006): 201-221; Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (Oxford:Routledge, 1996).
[115] Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 19.
[116] Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space and Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 2.
[117] Roy F. Baumeister and Mark R. Leary, "Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation," *Psychological Bulletin*, 117 no. 3 (1995): 497-529.
[118] Ibid., 497.
[119] Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 8.

political values.[120] The first aspect involves people's positions in the intersections of ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, class, etc. that form their sense of belonging; the second concerns people's identifications and emotional attachments to various collectives and groups; the third relates to the framework people use to value and judge, and therefore closely connects with the politics of belonging.[121] In line with Yuval-Davis, Antonsich also distinguished between personal belonging and the politics of belonging. He argued that belonging should be analysed as a personal, intimate sense of being "at home" in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource for constructing, claiming, justifying, or resisting forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging).[122]

2.5.1 Personal belonging and the concept of "home"

At the personal level, belonging is usually interpreted as an emotional feeling connecting a specific individual to a particular place, which is called "place-belongingness": "[…]to belong means to find a place where an individual can feel 'at home.'"[123] The concept of "home" also usually refers to the place of one's origin and is often romanticized as the "ideal place" where one feels most comfortable and secure.

While this conceptualisation of home acknowledges its close relationship to personal emotions, this approach also tends to see home as a fixed, bounded location that anchors people in a particular place.[124] However, in the literature on transnational mobility, home has often been given "shifting and mobile meaning"[125] due to the nature of mobility. To some extent, home is also experienced not just as a location anymore, but as "a set of relationships that shape identities and feelings of belonging."[126] It usually refers to "a symbolic space of familiarity,

[120] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and The Politics of Belonging," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 3 (2006): 197-214.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging - An Analytical Framework," *Geography Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 644-659.
[123] Ibid p 646.
[124] David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli, "Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities," *Geography Compass* 5, no. 7 (2011): 518.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.

comfort, safety, and emotional attachment" that does not need to be constantly translated or explained.[127]

Research has shown that individuals who have passed borders can establish close links to their new homes. These individuals thus create a "dual frame of reference"[128] or, in some cases, an intermediate realm of hybridity or a "third space"[129] on the basis of the different bounds and relationships they have constructed with others, instead of being rooted to their location of birth.

Ralph claimed that "home" has to be conceptualized as "dynamic and moored" to "reflect the complexity and ambivalence" of individuals' understanding and "home" experiences, in order to consider the connections between the homes of people who are in mobility as a manifestation of identity and the closely-related concept of belonging.[130] He suggested:

"[...] *a conceptualisation of home as being accordion-like, in that it stretches to expand migrants outwards to distant and remote places, while also squeezing to embed them in their proximate and immediate locals. In this way, home seems to extend outward and to be mobile, but also to be grounded and sedentary.*[131]"

Etymologically speaking, a preliminary semantic analysis of the Chinese term "belong" reveals the complexity of this concept and its relation to "home" in the Chinese context. In Chinese ,"to belong" is *Guishu* 归属, and it is composed of two words: *gui*, which can be understood as return, normally refers to return to one's home, for example, *guining* 归宁 or *guixiang* 归乡, which mean a married woman returning to her parental home for a visit and returning to one's hometown respectively. *Shu* can mean "subordinate to" or "part of." The compounding of these

[127] Bell Hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 213; Vanessa May, "Self, Belonging and Social Change," *Sociology* 45, no. 3 (2011): 363-378; Al-Ali, N. A and Koser, K. *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home* (London, Routledge:2004).
[128] Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, "The Emergence of a Transnational Social Formation and the Mirage of Return Migration among Dominican Transmigrants," *Identities* 4, no.2, (1997): 281–322.
[129] Shuang Liu, *Identity, Hybridity and Cultural Home* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015). Also see Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2010).
[130] David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli, "Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities," *Geography Compass* 5, no. 7 (2011): 518.
[131] Ibid, 518.

two words denotes not only a return to a previous place or condition, but also a process or a state of affiliation.[132]

2.5.2 Relational/social belonging

On the other hand, belonging cannot be just an individual's personal feelings. It is an interaction between self-perception and the perception of others that requires mutual recognition.[133] It should therefore be integrated into relationships with other individuals. As Probyn affirmed, "Belonging cannot be an isolated and individual affair."[134] In Ralph's words, belonging is an explicit social factor that provides the conditions for identity,[135] which speaks of experiences of inclusion or, more often exclusion, particularly for people on the move. The social processes of inclusion and exclusion are heavily influenced by where people belong as well as where they do not, and much research has focused on how people from mainstream groups have imposed their categories of belonging on mobile populations.[136] These studies have highlighted the problem that a sense of belonging is by no means just newcomers' emotions reflecting whether they subjectively feel like they fit in, but also involves how others in the mainstream decide who belongs to a particular collective based on given social standards and requirements.[137] Thus, belonging is a difficult task, and it is a negotiation process between two parties: on the one hand, it is the "newcomer" who strives for a sense of belonging; on the other hand, the locals, or sometimes the majority, have the power to decide whether belonging can be granted or denied.[138]

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[132] Han Chong, "Understanding Language And (Dis)Belongingness in Present-Day Sydney and Los Angeles Using Weibo – A Preliminary Proposal," *LEWI Working Paper Series*, no. 125 (2014).
[133] Paola Dusi, Giuseppina Messetti and Inmaculada González Falcón, "Belonging: Growing Up Between Two Worlds," Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 171 (2015): 560-568.
[134] Elspth Probyn, *Outside Belonging* (London: Routledge, 1996),13.
[135] David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli, "Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities," *Geography Compass* 5, no. 7 (2011): 524.
[136] Patricia Ehrkamp, "We Turks are No Germans": Assimilation Discourses and the Dialectical Construction of Identities in Germany, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 38, no.9 (2006): 1673–1692.
[137] Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the Politics of Belonging* (London, Macmillan: 2000); John Crowley, "The Politics of Belonging: Some Theoretical Considerations," in *The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Andrew Geddes and Adrian Favell (Farnham: Ashgate Pub, 1999).
[138] Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging– An Analytical Framework," *Geography Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 644-659.

This process of negotiation in the wider social space enforces the boundaries between *us* and *them*, as well as the interaction between "sameness" and "difference."[139] That is, an individual could be included in any particular group or community in part because he or she conforms to some attributes of resemblance or "sameness" that the rest of the collective possesses. On the contrary, an individual may not be included in a community in part because members of the community classify him or her as different or inferior.[140] The system of inclusion and exclusion, on the basis of perceptions about the sameness and differences of in-group and out-group membership respectively, can work either intra- or inter-group. More explicitly, in-group and out-group inclusion and exclusion are comparable procedures.[141] While everyone goes through processes of categorization, integration, and exclusion, these processes may be more pronounced for mobile populations, as they negotiate belonging in more than one home.[142]

In short, while we can say that the articulation of "I belong here" can be regarded primarily as a private and intimate sense of "home," it is also inevitably influenced by the operation of power relations. It is a process of negotiation that is largely constructed by individual imaginings of "sameness" and "difference" with others and is therefore socially defined as well.[143] This socially defined aspect of belonging also echoes the "identity and otherness" discussed in 2.4.

2.5.3 Modes of belonging

In line with the conceptualisation of belonging as both personal feeling and the politics of belonging, Krzyzanowski suggested a model of belonging with three modes or "stages" of identification to describe the dynamic process of the construction of belonging construction for people who have left home. Krzyzanowski used these patterns to analyse the construction of

[139] David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli, "Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities," *Geography Compass* 5, no. 7 (2011): 523- 524.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. Williams G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Belmont, CA, Wadsworth:1979): 33–47.
[142] David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli, "Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities," *Geography Compass* 5, no. 7 (2011): 517-530.
[143] Ibid.

(non)belonging by European immigrants. These three major modes of belonging are *attachments*, *belonging*, and *membership*.[144]

1) *Attachment* is a temporary, initial type of belonging that is formed in relation to a group. In most cases, attachment is characterized by manifestations of uncertainty and instability about belonging and is therefore a valid example of an ongoing search for identity and kinship.[145] The degree of attachment may become stronger over a longer time and closer spatial proximity, and an individual can have multiple objects of attachment. More importantly, it can have both abstract and functional elements.

2) *Belonging* is a second pattern of belonging that develops over time from a series of more sustained and well-founded attachments.

3) *Membership* is recognized and affirmed by society or by the majority through institutionalized practices. Unlike attachment and belonging, which are based on individual choice, membership is the final mode that deepens and stabilises an individual's sense of belonging.[146]

2.6 Transcultural identity and Chinese international students

The border between "here" and "there" has indeed become blurred as a result of the Internet and the advance of globalisation. It is apparent, at the present time, that collective identity matters have assumed what Said called "a generalized condition of homelessness."[147] This represents a world in which identity is increasingly becoming differently territorialised, or even completely deterritorialised. According to Giddens, identities are now becoming "dis-embedded," not only from ethnicity and nationhood, but also from conventional structures and locality.[148] The nation-state, as a political form, plays an active role in today's geopolitical and social context and it has become one of the central containers of identity. However, as these

[144] Michat Krzyzanowki, *The Discursive Construction of European Identities* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 173, 175.
[145] Ibid. 175
[146] Ibid.176-177.
[147] Edward Wadie Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage books, 1994), 18.
[148] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

traditional reference points of national boundaries begin to blur, there is much more to be learned about the formation and development of identities in this landscape.[149]

While opportunities for transcultural mobility have increased intensively, many seek to transcend the Self/Other demarcation by showing how intertwined they are. In this regard, the Other seems to be inherently constituted within the Self, and vice versa.[150] One needs to go beyond the demarcated version of identity, or that of Self/Other. The term "transcultural identity" therefore was introduced. This term encourages the analysis of phenomena that question supposed boundaries. It obliges the researcher to analyse phenomena from various angles and thus to insist on the multipolarity, multiple perspectives, and transformative dynamics inherent in the research subject.[151] This provides another way of thinking about difference through connection, while questioning the similarities of "us" and the differences of the "other" and the fundamental division between "us" and "them". I am interested in investigating the processes of production of difference and how differences are dis-constructed and negotiated in a culturally and socially interconnected space.[152]

The transcultural mode focuses on a deeper understanding that arises from a recognition of, acceptance of, and focus on the differences between individuals. This way of thinking becomes a bridge to further encounters, change, and understanding. Transcultural theory proposes another perspective on identity. Thus, one's identity is defined in a relationship with the other, and more importantly, exists in the process of being recognized by the other, so it is not merely unidirectional.[153] Transculturalism is seen part of the search to identify common ground and mutual benefits that transcend national and cultural boundaries.[154] In numerous ways, transculturalism proposes a new humanism based on a culture that recognizes and embraces

[149] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).
[150] Marissa Sonnis-Bell, David E Bell and Michelle Ryan, *Strangers, Aliens, Foreigners: The Politics of Othering from Migrants to Corporations* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 4.
[151] Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna in Conversation,"Understanding Transculturalism - Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna in Conversation," in *Transcultural Modernisms, Model House Research Group, Publication Series of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna* 12 (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 22–35.
[152] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 14, doi:10.1525/can.1992.7.1.02a00020.
[153] Donald Cuccioletta, "Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship," *London Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, (2001-2002*)*:1-11.
[154] Richard Slimbach*,* "The Transcultural Journey," *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 11, no. 1 (2005): 206, doi:10.36366/frontiers.v11i1.159.

the other.[155] Therefore, Gupta suggested that "a first step on this road is to move beyond naturalized conceptions of spatialized 'cultures' and to explore instead the production of difference within common, shared, and connected space."[156]

With regard to identity, transculturalism promotes individual identity over social identity because individual identity is based on multiple experiences of transcultural contacts that can have a lasting impact on one's values and worldview. Individuals differ in terms of the multiple cultural experiences they go through, how they learn from an intercultural contact situation, and how they process any inconsistencies; they also differ in regard to their choice of the cultural elements they want to integrate into their selves.[157] In line with Welsch, I believe that individuals are not merely the product of a certain ethnic or cultural identity, but are active in an interpersonal sphere in which cultural boundaries can be examined.[158]

The transcultural framework sometimes seems to ignore a group of people with transcultural mobility, by which I mean international student sojourners. The location of student mobility in current transcultural and identity theories is ambiguous and not within the traditional research paradigm. As I mentioned in the introduction, students' overseas experiences do not fit neatly into the current discourse on immigration, nor can they be easily explained by theories of diaspora, cosmopolitanism, second-generation immigration, or return migration.[159]

Often "international sojourn" refers to a temporary stay between six months and five years.[160] Unlike short-term travellers, who typically do not need to really commit to a new location, students overseas typically live abroad for longer periods of time, have a specific goal-oriented study life, and also tend to adapt to some degree to the local cultural norms. Firstly, different from immigrants, international students are sojourners who have either clear or obscure home orientations as their sojourning is temporary (albeit relatively long-term) and linked to the

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[155] Donald Cuccioletta, "Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship," *London Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, (2001-2002*)*:1-11.
[156] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 16, doi:10.1525/can.1992.7.1.02a00020.
[157] Mark E. Koltko-Rivera, "The Psychology of Worldviews," *Review of General Psychology* 8, no.1 (2004): 3-58.
[158] Wendell Welsch, "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, (London, Sage: 1999):194-213.
[159] Terra Gargano, "(Re)Conceptualizing International Student Mobility," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 13, no. 3 (2008): 331-346, doi:10.1177/1028315308322060.
[160] Fred E. Jandt, *Intercultural Communication: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, Sage: 2001).

specific purpose of pursuing a higher education degree.[161] Secondly, because international students are relatively young (normally in their emerging adulthood), they are more likely ready for change, e.g., their plans regarding where to stay after completing their studies varies.[162] Both the certainty and uncertainty make international students as a group of sojourners more complicated; therefore, their identities and sense of belonging are complex and multi-layered. Thus, Gargano has called on higher education researchers to recognize transnational constructions as ways to deepen the understanding of international student consciousness and place student perceptions and reconstructions of identity at the centre of the discourse about international student mobility.[163]

In an interview study with thirty-five international doctoral students from two German universities, Bilecen found that the students engaged in discourses of "difference" and "otherness" to significantly enhance their sense of meaning in their educational stay. They learned from the differences between their own and their home cultures, as well as from the new cultures and practices of their host country, as a strategy for establishing their own cosmopolitanism. International students also used the discourse of "otherness" to distinguish themselves from their fellow immigrants from their home countries or to elevate themselves to a higher position through their superior academic credentials. All of these strategies led to a stronger sense of belonging among students.[164] Bilecen's research provided a nascent basis for further exploration of the processes by which international students negotiate their identities and sense of belonging abroad. Her study also inspired me to focus the present study on investigating how students themselves directly express and negotiate their identities in the transnational spaces in which they live.[165]

The young Chinese students in my study also share the opportunities or challenges to live in the space where the familiar lines between "here" and "there" actually blurred. For some,

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[161] Lorraine Brown, "The Transformative Power of the International Sojourn," A*nnals of Tourism Research* 36, no. 3 (2009): 502-521, doi:10.1016/j.annals.2009.03.002.

[162] Jeffrey J. Arnett, Rita Zukauskiene and Kazumi Sugimura, "The New Life Stage of Emerging Adulthood at Ages 18-29 Years: Implications for Mental Health," *Lancet Psychiatry*, 1, no. 7 (2014), 569-576. doi:10.1016/s2215-0366(14)00080-7.

[163] Terra Gargano, "(Re)Conceptualizing International Student Mobility," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 13, no. 3 (2009): 331-346, doi:10.1177/1028315308322060.

[164] Başak Bilecen, "Negotiating differences: Cosmopolitan Experiences of International Doctoral Students," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 43, no.5, (2013): 667-688.

[165] Terra Gargano, "(Re)conceptualizing International Student Mobility: The Potential of Transnational Social Fields," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 13, no.3, (2009): 332.

"Chineseness" became complicated and nearly deterritorialized that it brought opportunities to (re)conceptualise their understanding and feeling of "Chineseness," as well as their own relationship with "Chineseness." The students were offered opportunities to work on the complex politics of "being Chinese" in today's globalizing world while going abroad. As Ang suggested, if identity, or "Chinese identity," was examined in terms of the theoretical commitments of a transcultural perspective, researchers needed to reject the convenience and comfort of reducing Chineseness to a natural racial essence. In addition, researchers should also question the category of Chineseness itself as a primary identifier or, in Chow's words, "to *unlearn* that submission to one's identification as Chinese as the ultimate signifier."[166] Following Ang, I am convinced that by investing in the intersections of different transcultural encounters in the wider world, it becomes inevitable to (re)construct open, pluralistic "post-Chinese" identities in order to articulate a hybrid, decomposed, pluralistic identity that is no longer accommodated by the "Chinese" label; this would possibly inspire young students overseas to step out of the cage of Chineseness and invite an opportunity to transcend their Chinese identity.[167]

In other words, to be a Chinese or non-Chinese, should not be a natural or self-evident matter anymore, but a political articulation or purposeful position in a more and more globalising world. Ang argued that Chineseness could not be treated as a static category of race and ethnicity, but rather as an open-ended, indeterminate symbol with meanings that are under constant renegotiation and re-presentation at different points in Chinese mobility. That is, Chineseness derives its meaning from the lived experiences of individuals, shaped by their transcultural experiences. Thus, Chinese people have many different identities, rather than one identity, a point of view which can help young Chinese students overseas to generate a new transcultural understanding of Chineseness. I agree with Ang who regarded this perception as an theoretical attempt to deconstruct and dissolve the concept of pure and essential Chineseness.[168] Because this understanding of Chineseness is no longer compatible with young Chinese students who were fully immersed from birth in the official narrative of patriotic education initiated in China in the 1990s, but who later managed to step out of the country as

[166] Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*; Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1993).
[167] Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, 50- 51.
[168] Ien Ang, "The Differential Politics of Chineseness," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 22 (1994):73, 72-79, www.jstor.org/stable/24491920.

young adults, constantly coming into closer contact with other cultures and societies, while still determining their own future paths.

Chapter 3 Research methodology

In this chapter, firstly, I will provide an overview of the research methods that I applied, including the selection of methods, target groups, choice of locality, interview procedures and interview techniques. Secondly, I will reflect on my own position in this study. Thirdly, I will introduce the method used for data analysis.

3.1 Selection of the research methods

> First of all, the nature of this research is to understand, using these students' own narratives, their complex experiences and the process through which they interpreted their identities. This understanding is possible because participants chose how to narrate their story and how to present themselves as protagonists. These choices served as a container of a specific identity position.[169] To capture the participants' dynamic presentations of their narratives, I decided to apply a qualitative research methodology; generally speaking, qualitative research offers an interpretive approach, concerned with exploring reality through the lens of those involved to foster to a better view of social realities.[170] To be more precise, I applied the Grounded Theory Method to design my research because Grounded Theory helps to generate explanatory theories based on a systematic approach to collect and analyse data.[171]

Secondly, coming from China and arriving in Germany for further higher education, these students might meet different challenges while adjusting to their new environment.[172] These new experiences continuously regenerated their understanding of their new environment and of their own culture, as well as of themselves. That is to say, the way the students identified themselves with China as well as Germany was also an ongoing matter. To record the

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[169] Neil Mclean and Linda Price, "The Mechanics of Identity Formation," in *Educational Futures*, ed. Jan Smith, Julie Rattray, Tai Peseta, and Daphne Loads (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2016), 45–57.

[170] Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardorff, and Ines Steinke, *A Companion To Qualitative Research*, trans. Bryan Jenner (London: Sage, 2004), 3–11; Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 6th ed. (London: Routledge, 2007); Rachel Ormston, Liz Spencer, Matt Barnard, and Dawn Snape, "The Foundations of Qualitative Research," in *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, ed. Jane Ritchie et al. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 4.

[171] Barney G. Glaser, *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*, (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1998).

[172] E.g., Colleen Ward, Stephen Bochner, and Adrian Furnham, *The Psychology of Culture Shock*, 2nd ed. (Hove: Routledge, 2001).

continuous process of the participants' reactions as well as their reflections in Germany required repeated observations over a certain period of time; therefore, I applied a longitudinal perspective with a prospective approach to understand the students' changes and aimed to track its process. Compared to retrospective studies, a prospective approach may allow participants to share more vivid descriptions and clearer memories. I was better able to capture nuanced changes and avoid "selective or false memory".[173]

I agree with McLeod that longitudinal research "[…] can illuminate, confirm or unsettle initial and tentative interpretations, alert us to recurring motifs and tropes in participants' narratives as well as to shifts and changes, suggest continuities or disruptions in emotional investments in desires and dispositions, and provide a strong sense of how particular identities are taking shape or developing. This allows identity to be analysed as a process and not simply as a repository for one off opinions and quotation."[174] Therefore longitudinal research is well suited for studying life trajectories and fit my research project.[175]

Thirdly, in order to understand the participating students' identity changes over time, I also needed a solid understanding of the students' personal *genesis* or "life history"[176] including, for example, family and education background, as well as their own narration and interpretation of their "life story"[177]: I therefore applied a biographical narrative approach within this longitudinal research. According to Rosenthal, "Just as the past is constituted out of the present and the anticipated future, [...] the biographical narratives provide information on the narrator's present as well as about his/her past and perspectives for the future."[178] Therefore, I was highly cognizant of the importance of both one's "past" as well as one's narrative about the "past." This was especially true in a study regarding the change in one's identity and sense of belonging

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[173] Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*.
[174] Julie McLeod, "Metaphors of the Self: Searching for Young People's Identity through Interviews," in *Researching Youth*, ed. Julie McLeod and Karen Malone (Hobart: Australian Clearing House for Youth Studies, 2000), 49.
[175] Lynn Calman, Lisa Brunton, and Alex Molassiotis, "Developing Longitudinal Qualitative Designs: Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Health Services Research," *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 13, no. 1 (February 2013), https://doi:10.1186/1471-2288-13-14.
[176] Gabrielle Rosenthal, "Biographical Research," in *Qualitative Research Practice*, ed. Clive Seale et al. (London: Sage, 2004), 48–64.
[177] Gabriele Rosenthal, "Social Transformation in the Context of Familial Experience: Biographical Consequences of a Denied Past in the Soviet Union," in *Biographies and the Division of Europe*, ed. Roswitha Breckner, Devorah Kalekin-Fischman, and Ingrid Miethe (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2000), 115–38; Gabriele Rosenthal, "Biographical Research," 54. There is a difference between "life story" and "life history." "Life story" refers to narrated personal life as related to another in conversation or as written down in the present. "Life history" refers to the experiences that a person has lived through.
[178] Gabrielle Rosenthal, "Biographical Research," 50.

after one leaves home and goes abroad, since both identity and sense of belonging include one's understanding regarding oneself and the Other, and every current understanding is embedded into the narrative of the "past." In other words, even in longitudinal studies, the data to be collected depend on the participants' recollections of time periods ranging from weeks to months, which are, in part, the "past" stories narrated by the interview partners. In short, conducting a study from both prospective longitudinal and retrospective biographical narrative interviews facilitated a more well-rounded understanding of the development of the participating Chinese students' identity when they study and live in Germany.

3.2 Target group and sampling

My data collection was guided by the logic of Grounded Theory, beginning with a theoretical sampling. According to Glaser and Strauss, theoretical sampling is a process of data collection for the generation of a new theory, which means that the researchers aim to construct a theory from the emerging data, but at the same time pursue the process of selecting new samples to study and develop the theory.[179]

For my own study, first, Chinese students who come to Germany for master's degrees are the largest group among all Chinese students in German universities, including Chinese students studying for bachelor's degrees.[180] The majority of Chinese students studying at German universities are master's students. Partially because, before 2019, Chinese applicants were generally not eligible for admission to German universities without higher education experience in Chinese universities. It is therefore practical for Chinese students to apply for a master's degree in Germany after completing bachelor study in China.[181]

Compared to Ph.D. students, who are normally a few years older than other students and might be clearer regarding their career and family plans, master's students are normally a few years younger, in their early or middle 20s, and may have more ambiguous future plans. They are in

[179] Anselm L. Strauss and Barney G. Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1967).
[180] Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst [DAAD], 2011.
[181] Rachel Michael, "The Rise of Chinese Students at German Universities," *WENR*, October 5, 2015, https://wenr.wes.org/2015/10/rise-chinese-students-german-universities.

the process of so-called "emerging adulthood," which leads them experience potentially great transformation in their lives.[182] Therefore, in this study, I planned to focus on Chinese students who held a bachelor's degree from a Chinese university and then came to study in a master's program in Germany. However, after a half-year pilot study, I realized that there were also quite a few students who had already obtained bachelor's degrees in China and had registered themselves again in a bachelor's program in Germany or who had simply withdrawn from their studies in China after one or two semesters and then restarted a new bachelor's program in Germany. I also included them in this study. In terms of age, the target interview partners were born in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which are called "*balinghou*" (post-80s) and "*jiulinghou*" (post-90s) in the Chinese context. They are among the "one-child generation" as well as the "patriotic generation."[183]

Second, for the purpose of the longitudinal study, I focused on degree-seeking students, who normally plan to stay in Germany for a longer period of time (at least for four semesters), instead of tracking exchange students, who normally stay in Germany only for one or two semesters. Of course, I do not deny that change in identity can occur within a short term or between different situations, nor do I want to make a simple dichotomy between a short-term and a long-term change. I aimed to discover the change process that occurred about a five-year period, because research on identity change over a longer time span is normally complex and costly, and therefore there is a shortage of such studies.

3.3 Choice of the locality

Since this longitudinal research aimed to keep track of each individual's change over time, it was time and energy consuming. Therefore, multiple localities for the interviews would have been quite challenging for a single researcher. In order to focus on the narrative stories of each individual participant, I chose to carry out my field work in one university town with a population around 118,000 located in the middle of Germany. There were three reasons for this choice: 1) this location was practical because I am registered in this university and used to study there as an exchange student in my master's degree program, and therefore I am familiar

[182] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (2000): 469–480, https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469.
[183] This relates to the "Patriotic Education Campaign" which will be introduced in Chapter Four.

with its environment; 2) it is located in a medium-sized city that could be described as the prototype for a German university town: friendly, quiet, and multicultural; 3) the university is a well-known comprehensive university where Chinese students are among the highest number of international students and come from a wide variety of backgrounds.

3.4 Interview procedures

Before carrying out full-scale interviews, a retrospective study with students who had almost completed their studies was carried out and this served as a pilot study. The participants had already stayed in Germany for at least one and a half to three years, and their insights suggested some topics that I could follow up on with new arrivals, yet that might not be easily foreseen by the new arrivals themselves. This pilot study, with a biographical narrative interview method, was carried out in December 2013 and March 2014 with four Chinese students.

In order to meet new arrivals, I participated in different welcoming receptions organized by the university, the Chinese student association, and a local Chinese Christian church community during the orientation phase for new students in the winter semester of 2014. I also participated in various German language courses (both in the university and Volkshochschule) and activities such as Chinese New Year celebration programs and international students' activities. I made various contacts with potential participants through these events. The sample aimed to capture a diversity of Chinese students according to such axes of difference as age, gender, family background, regional origin, religious affiliation, and political persuasion. The sampling was also partially conducted with a snowball technique in which I asked the interviewees or their friends to identify other individuals who would like to participate. I initiated most of the connections to the interviewees, except for one interview partner who contacted me and asked to be interviewed.

On the one hand, I was aware that a longitudinal approach requires follow-up interviews with participants at fixed intervals.[184] On the other hand, it was necessary to keep a good rhythm

[184] Susanne Vogl et al., "Developing an Analytical Framework for Multiple Perspective, Qualitative Longitudinal Interviews (MPQLI)," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 21, no. 2 (2017): 177–190.

for the intervals in order to detect changes between different intervals.[185] I also wanted to make sure my participants felt neither intruded upon nor overburdened by continuing follow-up interviews.[186] Therefore, I decided to conduct formal follow-up interviews once a year. After initiating the first wave of interviews with 35 students in 2014, I managed to conduct at least one formal interview every year from 2014 to 2019. By the end of 2019, I had successfully completed interviews with 25 Chinese students from the beginning of their study until after their graduation. Most of the students started their studies in 2013 or 2014 and finished their studies between 2016 and 2020. Each interview lasted from 90 to 180 minutes.

In addition, the students were also invited to informal conversations at least one or two times over the course of a year. My aim for the interviews was to follow my interview partners until they finished their studies in Germany, but during the course of the research, I decided to also carry out one or two final follow-up interviews after the interviewees' graduation when it was possible, e.g. after the students had left the university and/or Germany, in order to identify their paths afterwards.

However, due to the nature of the longitudinal research, one of the great challenges I faced during the five years of data collection was loss of contact with some of my interview partners for various reasons. As Cohen and his colleagues pointed out, some of the disadvantages of a prospective approach are that it is not only time consuming but also might suffer from sample mortality[187] and attrition.[188] For example, during my research, some students decided to drop out of university and left Germany without obtaining a degree, and some students simply did not have enough time or interest to continue participating in my research.

Table 1.1

Demographic characteristics of the participants by hometown city

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[185] Joseph C. Hermanowicz, "The Longitudinal Qualitative Interview," *Qualitative Sociology* 36, no. 2 (2013): 189–208, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-013-9247-7; This also differentiates the longitudinal method from other types of long-term research, e.g. lengthy field study. See Aleksandra Winiarska, "Qualitative Longitudinal Research: Application, Potentials and Challenges in the Context of Migration Research," (Centre of Migration Research Working Papers, University of Warsaw, 2017), https://depot.ceon.pl/handle/123456789/15189.

[186] Susie Weller, "Evolving Creativity in Qualitative Longitudinal Research with Children and Teenagers," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 15, no. 2 (2012): 119–133, https:doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2012.649412.

[187] Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*.

[188] Winiarska, "Qualitative Longitudinal Research."

Hometown	(n)
Beijing	3
Mianyang	1
Kaifeng	2
Haikou	1
Xi’an	1
Jiujiang	1
Harbin	1
Nanjing	2
Guiyang	1
Wuhan	1
Hefei	1
Longyan	1
Qingdao	1
Shanghai	2
Chengdu	1
Hangzhou	1
Fuzhou	1
Kunming	1
Hohhot	1
Guangzhou	1
Total	25

Table 1.2 Demographic characteristics of the participants by field of study

Study of field	(n)
Computer science	2
Biology	1
Mathematics	1
Geology	1
Business economics	1
Political science	3
German literature	2
English literature	1
Sinology	2
Agriculture	2
Sociology	2
Engineering	2
Law	2
Intercultural German studies	3
Total	25

3.5 Interview techniques

Regarding the interview techniques, I applied the biographical narrative method after Rosenthal. In this method, the researcher should allow the interview partner to develop their

gestalt[189] and felicitate the verbalization of memory processes.[190] It is therefore important for the researcher to develop a capacity for attentive and active listening that allows the interview partners to narrate freely and openly.

Rosenthal divided the narrative process into two parts.[191] First, the main narrative is a process that invites research participants to develop their *gestalt*. It begins with a single initial question and then proceeds without interruption from the researcher until the interviewee completes the main narrative. The single question could be "I am interested in the topic of Chinese students studying abroad; could you please tell me your story about this? You have as much time as you wish. I will just take some notes and will not disturb you." In the second part, the interviewer first asks "internal questions," which refer to the themes touched upon by the interviewee, and then asks "external questions," which refer to areas the researcher wishes to investigate but which have not yet been addressed in the main narrative stage. One thing that needs to be noted is that the goal of the second part is to provoke the interviewees to add to their narration. An example of an "internal question" could be "Can you please tell me more about your mother?" if the interviewee touched up the theme of "mother" but did not explain it further.[192]

For every interviewee, a biographical interview was carried out, normally at the first meeting. I normally started the follow-up rounds of the narrative interviews with a question like: "Can you please tell me about your recent experiences since our last interview? You can have as much time as you want." I then followed up with internal and external questions. For external questions, I developed an interview guide and checked if the interviewees had covered the topics in it.[193] A good interview guide, according to Kvale, both is "thematically" related to the research questions and "dynamically" builds a good interpersonal relationship with conversational partners.[194] Interviewers should also bear in mind the difference in wording

[189] Gabriele Rosenthal, *Erlebte und Erzählte Lebensgeschichte: Gestalt und Struktur Biographischer Selbstbeschreibung*, (Frankfurt: Campus, 1995). Rosenthal presented a complete gestalt-theoretical approach; gestalt is understood here very simply as the structural relations of events, experiences, memories, and self-presentation.
[190] Rosenthal, *Erlebte und Ezhalte Lebensgeschichte*, 186–200.
[191] Gabrielle Rosenthal, "Biographical Research," 48–64.
[192] For more examples please see Tom Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing Biographical Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods*, (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2001).
[193] A list of external questions is attached in Appendix II.
[194] Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 1st ed. (London: Sage, 1996), 186–200.

between "research questions" and "interview questions."[195] Some interviewees were not comfortable enough to talk freely without semi-structured questions, so I conducted the narrative interview later with them when the relationship between us became closer.

I mostly chose a café in the university or in the city as the interview location because it was relatively neutral and familiar for both me and my interview partners. I normally offered to pay for my interview partners' tea or coffee as a gesture to show my appreciation for their time. I also conducted several interviews at interviewees' homes when they invited me there. While researchers may have less control over the home environment, familiarity may help the interview partner to relax and result in a more productive interview.[196]

The language used in the interviews was mostly Mandarin, since it was the lingua franca for both the interview partners and me. The exception was the interviews I conducted with one student who came from the same region as I did. With her, we spoke in the dialect because she felt more comfortable with the dialect and it helped develop our relationship. Each interview was recorded and fully transcribed into Chinese afterwards.

3.5.1 Further methods

As qualitative researchers are encouraged to be creative and combine different methods to explore new research perspectives, triangulation techniques were used to improve data quality and study the problem from multiple dimensions.[197] In addition to the formal interviews each year, as mentioned earlier, students were invited for an informal conversation at least one or two times over the course of the year. For the informal conversations, instead of recording all the data while having conversations with my interview partners, I chose to write carefully detailed field notes as soon as I had completed each informal interview for two reasons: firstly, I found most participants felt more comfortable and natural without recording; secondly, I also wanted to show to my participants that I, as a fellow human being, did genuinely care about their lives and stories, and I was not just a Ph.D. student desperately trying to use their stories

[195] Kvale, *InterViews*; Herbert J. Rubin and Irene Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2nd ed. (California: Thousand Oaks, 2005).
[196] Kvale, *InterViews*.
[197] Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009); Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*.

as data to complete my thesis. I also wanted my participants to be open and relaxed under my gaze rather than engaging in the act of performance.[198]

Furthermore, I also conducted participant observation both at certain formal events (e.g. the Chinese Spring Festival and Moon Festival celebrations organized by the Chinese Students Association at the university) and at informal events (e.g. orientation activities, private birthday parties), as well as through the status updates and pictures uploaded on social media used by the students (e.g. WeChat[199] and Facebook). Due to the advancement of digital technology and the fast pace of life, a large proportion of day-to-day communication that used to happen face-to-face has been moved to a digital platform.[200] In my research, the participants' moment-to-moment interactions on digital media, especially on WeChat, turned out to be a rich site for me to explore their identity changes. WeChat's key features include instant messaging and Moments (*Pengyouquan* 朋友圈), which allow users to update their posts on Moments and their WeChat friends to leave comments on them.

All my participants added me as a WeChat friend, except for one interview partner from Xinjiang who deleted me after two interviews, and I lost contact with him. Nevertheless, WeChat became a helpful tool for me to keep in contact with the people I interviewed, and their posts on Moments also became an important source for me to understand their life in Germany. When I found that interviewees had updated something relevant, for example, when a student was invited to attend a gathering by a German host family for the first time and then uploaded pictures of the Chinese food she had cooked for them and expressed explicitly how happy she was, I would invite them for a follow-up meeting to narrate more about that experience at our formal or informal interviews. In this way, I could obtain data right after the "moment" in order to catch the participants' vivid memories.

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[198] Marsha Giselle Henry, "Where Are You Really From: Representation, Identity and Power in the Fieldwork Experience of a South Asian Diasporic," *Qualitative Research* 3, no. 2 (2003): 229–242.

[199] A popular mobile text and voice messaging communication service since it was launched in 2011. It serves as the most popular social media application for smartphones used in China, partly because of the blocking of YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter in China. WeChat provides various approaches for instant messaging, and it also supports its users to post images and texts in the Moments feature as well as comments and "likes" in the Moments. See e.g. "WeChat's World: China's WeChat Shows the Way to Social Media's Future," August 6, 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/business/21703428-chinas-wechat-shows-way-social-medias-future-wechat's-world?fsrc=scn/li/te/pe/ed/wechatsworld.

[200] Wan Shun Eva Lam, "Multiliteracies on Instant Messaging in Negotiating Local, Translocal, and Transnational Affiliations: A Case of an Adolescent Immigrant," *Reading Research Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2009): 377–397, https://doi.org/10.1598/rrq.44.4.5.

Lastly, interviews were not only conducted with the Chinese students themselves, but also with their parents, their German/international contacts (e.g. language tandem partners), and/or friends if possible. I also conducted two group interviews with one participant and his German tandem partner and friend together. Parents and friends were introduced through students who participated in the research, but I totally understood that not every participant felt comfortable about sharing their contacts with me. Thus, I was not able to conduct extra interviews with every participant's family and friends. However, the interviews I did manage to conduct offered me a wider and sometimes different picture of the participants' life in Germany and communication with their family and friends both in China and Germany.

3.6 Positioning of the researcher

There are different ways to refer to people who respond to interview questions, e.g. interviewees, informants, and so on. However, either "interviewee" or "informant" implies passiveness. I agree with Rubin and Rubin, who conceptualized the relationship as that of "conversational partners." This term suggests that responding to interview questions is a harmonious and collaborative experience, as both the interviewer and the interviewee are trying to reach a common understanding.[201] Because, as McLeod and Lyn suggested, a story produced only by the researcher would be "incomplete" and also falsely substitute the voices of others for the voice of the people being interviewed,[202] I was cognizant of my efforts to obtain a deep understanding of Chinese students' living experiences in Germany as well as of the students themselves, and it was highly important to me to remain reflexive about my position during the research.

On the one hand, as a Chinese student in Germany myself, my physical appearance as a co-national and my role as a student on campus provided me legitimacy when entering into the Chinese students' communities. In this way, I, as a researcher, was an "insider," and many of my conversation partners assumed it was easy and natural to be understood by me. On the other hand, I regarded myself as an "outsider" to them as a doctoral student and as a researcher when

[201] Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 14.
[202] Julie Mcleod and Lyn Yates, "Can We Find Out about Girls and Boys Today—Or Must We Settle for Just Talking about Ourselves? Dilemmas of a Feminist, Qualitative, Longitudinal Research Project," *The Australian Educational Researcher* 24, no. 3 (1997), 26.

I expressed my interest in their experiences in Germany. This role of being a researcher and a doctoral student also encouraged their trust in me. However, there was no clear-cut distinction between "insider" and "outsider."[203] My experience was similar to that of Başak Bilecen, to some extent. She conducted her doctoral research about the social support networks of international doctoral students in Germany as an international doctoral student at that time herself.[204]

It is interesting to note the forms of addressed used in our interviews. Traditional Chinese social etiquette rules discourage the use of given names for people who are not close friends or newly introduced acquaintances. Chinese given names are often used only for "intimate others." Li has also explained that addressing someone by their Chinese given name, in addition to indicating a close relationship, often implies a downward communication, e.g. teacher to student, parent to child, or senior colleague to junior colleague.[205]

This also applies in Chinese universities and schools, where forms of social address follow a hierarchy. For example, male senior fellow students are called senior brothers (*xuezhang*, 学长), while female seniors are called senior sisters (*xuejie*, 学姐). Take myself as an example: as a Ph.D. student, I was three to six years older than the majority of my research partners. At the beginning of my study, in order to downplay the difference in age and degrees sought between me and my interview partners and to increase the potential open-hearted and equal-footed conversations, I introduced myself with my given name when I first met my interview partners. However, soon I found out that not everyone accepted my offer to call me by my given name, Líli. Very likely, according to the Chinese system of forms of address, it seemed too disrespectful to address a senior fellow student with her given name. Instead, many of the participants addressed me as *xuejie*, a senior sister. However, once I suggested that they could also address me as Líli using the English intonation *Lily*, most of them accepted gladly. The change in form of address speeded up the process of getting acquainted and the clearly shortened the distance between us.[206] The Western-style name seemed to act as a buffer

[203] Sharan B. Merriam et al., "Power and Positionality: Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status within and across Cultures," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 20, no. 5 (2001): 405–416.
[204] Başak Bilecen, *International Student Mobility and Transnational Friendships* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[205] David C.S. Li, "Borrowed Identity: Signaling Involvement with A Western Name," *Journal of Pragmatics* 28, no. 4 (1997): 489–514.
[206] Li, "Borrowed Identity."

between me and my interview partners, to prevent the conversations from feeling too formal or too intimate, and to avoid the awkward situation of mistakenly using a downward form of communication with someone else. Western names served as a "borrowed communication system," which turned out to be a very practical approach for some of my research partners.[207]

Since the characteristics of a longitudinal research study demand repetitive narrative interviews with one's conversation partners over time, relationships develop between both sides. A genuine familiarity and trust were generated by the formal interviews and informal conversations. However, completing a qualitative longitudinal study successfully involves a long-term commitment from both the study participants and the researcher, which may complicate the relationship.[208] Thomson and Holland found in their longitudinal research that several changes happened to both interviewers and interviewees during the several years of their study.[209] In other words, the long-term contact might have created an intervention influence from the researcher during the long process of the research.[210]

I did not attempt to intervene in the lives of the interviewed Chinese students in Germany, but neither do I deny that my research was likely to do so. Thus, I decided to keep the relationship neither too formal nor too close, and to be constantly reflective. I recognized that being invited to narrate their lives once a year systematically was not the norm for Chinese students living abroad, and that the influence of the research process must be considered in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data.[211] During the study I also invited the Chinese students to voice the influence of the interviews on them.[212] Many participants commented that having someone like me who showed interest in learning about their experiences in Germany was an emotional comfort for them and some were also glad that I kept the recordings of the interviews and wanted to have a copy and listen to what they had thought earlier. This echoes the "therapeutic potential" of the qualitative interviews mentioned in previous studies.[213] Because "while the researcher hears a personal, private narrative that may not have been previously

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[207] Ibid.
[208] Vogl et al., "Developing an Analytical Framework," 177–190.
[209] Rachel Thomson and Janet Holland, "Hindsight, Foresight and Insight: The Challenges of Longitudinal Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 6, no. 3 (2003): 233-244.
[210] Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*.
[211] Thomson and Holland, "Hindsight, Foresight and Insight."
[212] Ibid.
[213] Maxine Birch and Tina Miller, "Inviting Intimacy: The Interview as Therapeutic Opportunity," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 3, no. 3 (2000): 189–202.

disclosed, the interviewee may experience the action of disclosure as a revelation, promoting a new understanding of past events."[214]

Even though I wanted to minimize my intervention in the lives of the participants in this study, nonetheless, it was unavoidable to respond to the students' need for reciprocity, since they were not just research objects but conversational partners whom I genuinely cared about (not only out of research interest). Therefore, I responded to my conversational partners' questions or need for help. Students who had just arrived in Germany were more likely to ask me for advice, for example, regarding making friends with Germans, since I was normally three to six years older than they were and I was a female whom they felt generally comfortable with.

Therefore, I was fully aware that there was a potential that my interactions with the study participants might bring about the so-called "Hawthorne effect."[215] However, I was also aware that, as a researcher, "no matter how many methodological guarantees we try to put in place, the subjective always intrudes."[216] There is no doubt that researchers may bring their own baggage that has an impact on the findings, and that they may misrepresent their conversational partners if they do not examine their own motivations and projections. With all the considerations above, I attempted to keep a balance between being a researcher and being trustworthy and loyal to the interview partners. In order to avoid falling into the trap of making the data fit into my own preconceived ideas and research questions, I also tried my very best to be highly reflexive about my own position in the relationships during the process of interviews and data analysis.

While successive interviews are able to offer the researcher a better understanding of the individual, another drawback to longitudinal research is that there is no absolute guarantee of continuity. All the interviews were based on voluntary participation, which means the interviewees were free to withdraw anytime. For example, there were students who changed their university and then moved to another city, or who were very busy and therefore not available for in-depth interviews anymore. However, there were also students who withdrew

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[214] Birch and Miller, "Inviting Intimacy," 190.

[215] John G. Adair, "The Hawthorne Effect: A Reconsideration of the Methodological Artifact," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 69, no. 2 (1984): 334–345, https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.69.2.334. The Hawthorne effect (also referred to as the observer effect) is a type of reactivity in which individuals improve an aspect of their behavior in response to their awareness of being observed.

[216] Valerie Walkerdine, Helen Lucey, and June Melody, *Growing Up Girl: Psycho-Social Explorations of Gender and Class* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 84.

from the research and subsequently returned. During this whole interview process, I shared research ethics with Miller and Bell, who said that consent should invariably be regarded as tentative in terms of participation and withdrawal.[217]

3.7 Data analyses

Due to the complexity of longitudinal data, Holland and Thomason suggested that researchers analyse them in two directions: "cross-sectionally" and "longitudinally." The former can link and compare different narratives in each wave of data collection and seek patterns and typologies, whereas the latter focuses on analyzing the development of a particular narrative over time and developing typologies of changes by comparing case profiles.[218] This emphasis on both synchronic and diachronic analysis can be regarded as "methodological triangulation," which helps to enhance the rigour and credibility of the results, according to Leech and Onwuegbuzie.[219]

However, one of the challenges in analysing longitudinal qualitative data is the absence of absolute closure of the data collection, because there is always an attempt for researchers to collect another round of data and interpretation seems always provisional.[220] As Julie McLeod pointed out, the authority and consistency of the researcher's interpretation are challenged by the open nature of the longitudinal study, because, as a new round of data arrives that can "reconstruct" old data, this may challenge previous interpretations.[221] This thus raises the question of when the researcher can begin writing up the findings and how the process of change should be evaluated, as data collection and analysis procedures cannot be entirely separated in a qualitative longitudinal study either.[222] Regarding the question raised above, I agree with Thomson's view that "the moment at which analysis is undertaken is a moment of analytic closure."[223]

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[217] Tina Miller and Linda Bell, "Consenting to What? Issues of Access, Gatekeeping and 'Informed' Consent," in *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, ed. Tina Miller, Maxine Birch, Melanie Mauthner, and Julie Jessop (London: Sage, 2002).
[218] Thomson and Holland, "Hindsight, Foresight and Insight"; Winiarska, "Qualitative Longitudinal Research."
[219] Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Nancy Leech, "Sampling Designs in Qualitative Research: Making the Sampling Process More Public", *The Qualitative Report* 12, no. 2, (2007): 238–254.
[220] Thomson and Holland, "Hindsight, Foresight and Insight."
[221] Ibid.
[222] Rachel Thomson, *Unfolding Lives: Youth, Gender and Change*, (Bristol: Policy Press, 2009).
[223] Thomson *Unfolding Lives*, 134.

On the one hand, for the cross-sectional analysis, I began to code the transcripts thematically after the first wave of data collection in 2014. The aim of this early analysis was to identify key themes that emerged across the data set and to get a sense of how these themes played out differently or similarly based on the respondents' gender, study subject, language skills, etc. I used the software ATLAS.ti[224] to facilitate this process. Coding data after each stage of fieldwork enabled me to understand the Chinese students' narratives in a more systematic way and also to move forward to the next stage of data collection. In order to maintain participants' anonymity, with their consent, I chose numbers instead of replacement names as pseudonyms in the cross-sectional analysis.

On the other hand, the analytical tools employed for the longitudinal perspective were based on Rosenthal's biographical case reconstruction.[225] My first case reconstruction started with Zhang's interviews. First, because she shared her story most generously with me among all my interviews, which provided me wide perspectives; second, I noticed that she developed a very strong allegiance to the motherland, but at the same time, she was trying very hard to fit in the host environment. Her story helps me to recognize the complexity of one's story studying and living abroad. Following the principle of the maximum contrast, after Zhang's case, I aimed to start the analysis of Hao's interviews. Different from Zhang, who developed a strong attachment to China, Hao's trajectory was developing a more globalised mindset in Germany, which was a great contrast to Zhang's case. The third interview I decided to reconstruct was Wang's. To some extent, Wang's case was different from both cases above, and his case was seems in the middle of the spectrum of the identity change and it could provide me different perspectives.

There were six steps in this analysis. The first step was to analyse the data of the interview partners in chronological order. The purpose of this step was to reconstruct the interview partners' life histories and outline their life stages. A key feature of biographical data is its relative independence from the interview partner's narrative. In my own analysis, I sketched the interview partners' life histories based on their date and place of birth, gender, year of schooling, university, and date of arrival in Germany. Although the focus was on the

[224] ATLAS.ti equips qualitative researchers with instruments for managing image, text, audio, and other data.
[225] Gabriele Rosenthal, "Reconstruction of Life Stories: Principles of Selection in Generating Stories for Narrative Biographical Interviews," in *The Narrative Study of Lives* (Newbury Park, London: Sage, 1993).

individuals' life experiences, their family background, such as the age, occupation, and geographical location of their parents, was also taken into account.

The second step was text and thematic field analysis. The assumption underlying this type of analysis is that the life stories recounted in a study are not composed of a sequence of random and disconnected events, but are based on a context of meaning.[226] Therefore, the life stories being narrated reflect a series of interlinked chapters that form a close network of cross-references to one another.[227] That is to say, the goal of this step was to rebuild the biographer's "life story".[228] Since, in this longitudinal research, there were several follow-up interviews with each interview partner, I was also very aware of the similarity or repetition of themes in each follow-up interview, as well as the discontinuities and contradictions in themes, and so tried to understand the interconnections in each story.

The third step was to reconstruct each interview partner's history. In contrast to the second step of analysing the thematic field of the interview partners' narration sequence, the aim of this step was to reconstruct the "lived history" and compare it with the "story" narrated by the biographer. Needless to say, the concepts of "history" and "story" in this approach are unavoidably interdependent.[229] This step was also one of the main parts of the analysis process.

The fourth step was microanalysis of each interview partner's text segments extracted from the interview transcripts. The text segments were broken down into small units and then interpreted sequentially as a way to allow for more careful analysis. The purpose of this step was to check the hypotheses of the previous analytical steps and clarify ambiguity.[230] I carried out this step with my colleagues from Rosenthal's research team several times as a means of investigator triangulation.[231] When I presented the data to the team, I excluded all information about the biographers and decontextualized the text segments. Each text segment was analysed individually, but also in relation to the segments that had already been analysed.[232]

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[226] Gabriele Rosenthal, *The Holocaust in Three Generations* (London: Cassell, 1998).
[227] Wolfram Fischer, *Time and Chronic Illness: A Study on the Social Constitution of Temporality* (Berkeley, 1982): 165.
[228] Rosenthal, "Reconstruction of Life Stories," 59–91.
[229] Rosenthal, "Reconstruction of Life Stories."
[230] Rosenthal, *Erlebte und Erzählte Lebensgeschichte*, 221.
[231] Norman K. Denzin, *Sociological Methods* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), 291.
[232] Rosenthal, *Erlebte und Erzählte Lebensgeschichte*, 224.

The fifth step was to contrast the life story and life history of each interview partner. This comparison revealed the differences between past and present perspectives.[233] The aim of this step of the analysis was to narrow the gap between the interview partners' narratives and lived experiences, as well as to reflect on their interaction. As Breckner has pointed out, although former events are important to the present, the perspective of the present, and future anticipation, affect the way past events are presented.[234]

The sixth step of Rosenthal's approach was to form types and work on theoretical generalisation at a more abstract level. The purpose of this step is to develop typologies to identify the general characteristics in a particular case reconstruction. Researchers return to the research questions and construct a type that demonstrates the biographical process that led to this presentation or clarify the structure that generates it.[235] In my study, three out of twenty-five biographical narrative interviews were selected for this step, and three types were thus constructed.

To conclude, the research methodology used in this study, with a longitudinal method combined with biographical narrative interviews, had the potential to detect more subtle changes than a survey of direct questions.[236] The participants in my study of course did not represent the various experiences of all Chinese students in Germany or overseas in general. However, I hoped the longitudinal element of this method design and the narrative biographical interview method could offer a solid basis for better understanding this group of Chinese students' life experiences in Germany. Although combining narrative and cross-sectional data analysis takes a lot of time and effort, their combination does help in gaining a coherent and nuanced understanding.

The results will be presented in two main parts, in order to answer my research questions in a more rounded and comprehended way. The first part, which will be presented in Chapter Five, Chapter Six, and Chapter Seven, presents results from a cross-sectional dimension. It focuses

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[233] Rosenthal, *Erlebte und Erzählte Lebensgeschichte*, 225.

[234] Roswitha Breckner, "Leben in polarisierten Welten: Zum Verhältnis von Migration und Biographie im Ost-West-Europäischen Migrationsfeld" (Doctoral thesis, Fakultät Architektur, Umwelt und Gesellschaft, TU Berlin, 2001), 206.

[235] Rosenthal, "Biographical Research."

[236] Iain Wilson, "Does International Mobility Change Chinese Students' Political Attitudes? A Longitudinal Approach," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 21, no. 3 (2016): 336.

on linking and contrasting the twenty-five interviewed students in each wave of the collected data. The second part will be presented in Chapter Eight and is based on three biographical reconstructive cases that developed three different types of life trajectories and changes. However, before I present the results, I would like to dedicate Chapter Four to explaining the official construction of a Chinese identity and its impact on the young generation as a background to this study.

Chapter 4 The official construction of a Chinese identity and its impact on the young generation

In this chapter, I will introduce the context in which my research partners lived in China. It is necessary in this study to comprehend why and how the Chinese state tried to (re)construct young people's national identity by implementing certain propaganda in China and how this generation has differed from their predecessors regarding their understanding of the relationship between China and themselves under this social structure. I realized, that without a comprehension of how this social structure has shaped young people's identity and how it has become part of individuals' internalised "biographical resources," it would be difficult to investigate Chinese students' new experiences in Germany and how these students had digested new information and negotiated their identity and belonging during and after their stay overseas.

I start this chapter by discussing different scholarly views on the theme of nations and nationalism. Next, I will give a brief introduction to the origins of Chinese nationalism. Then, I will present the crisis of legitimacy that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had to face in the late 1980s and the Party's justification for implementing a campaign of patriotic education in order to seek solutions to the issues. Lastly, I will explore the contents of Patriotic Education Campaign itself and define relations between the campaign and the perceptions of the younger generation who grew up in this atmosphere that still has a profound impact.

4.1 Different theories and approaches to nations and nationalism

The concepts of nation and nationalism have been complicated, and one can easily become lost in a "terminal jungle" while trying to untangle these concepts.[237] Some of the earlier scholars, such as Kohn, Hayes, Kedourie, and Deutsch, were first published around the 1950s and 1960s,[238] and later scholars, for example, Gellner, Connor, Nairn, and Smith, continued their

[237] Anderson Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1993), 3.

[238] See Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism, A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944); Carlton JH Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York: Russell & Russell., 1968); Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford u.a.: Blackwell, 1993); Karl Wolfgang Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 1978).

discussions and published their works in the 1980s.[239] The discussions were mostly around four basic topics of "when," "what," "why," and "how": e.g. when did nations and nationalism start to exist, and what is a nation or nationalism? Why are there nations? How were nations and nationalism formed?

Özkirimli described three main approaches to studying these topics: modernist, ethno-symbolist, and primordialist. He said, "The common denominator of the modernists is their conviction in the modernity of nations and nationalism; that of the ethno-symbolists is the stress they lay in their explanations on ethnic pasts and cultures; finally that of the primordialists is their belief in the antiquity and naturalness of nations."[240]

Modernists believe that both nations and nationalism are phenomena that are entirely modern and novel. They assume that these concepts are closely related to the advent of industrialization in Western Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Modernists also tend to believe that nations are rational results that were produced by elites in a society to control the masses.[241] For example, Ernest Gellner, a key modernist, argued that modern industrializing economies require cultural uniformity to secure economic success, and therefore a new identity needs to be introduced for a particular community.[242]

Benedict Anderson furthered Gellner's thesis and coined "imagined communities" for a sense of kinship amongst individuals who have never met and potentially would never meet.[243] He considered print capitalism to be the key for the advent of national fraternity because the growth of the press created the foundation for the establishment of "imagined communities," when these press companies began publishing in vernacular language. In short, modernists claim that the development of industrial societies generated general national consciousness and resulted in modern nation states.

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[239] See Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Phoenix, 1998); Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1997); Anthony D Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 1983).
[240] Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[241] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 19.
[242] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Cornell University Press, 2009).
[243] Anderson Benedict, *Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1998).

Primordialism is the viewpoint that nationalism stems from "primordial" sentimental roots including being born into a certain community, speaking a particular language or participating in specific traditions. Simply put, according to this school of thought, nationalism can be interpreted as a group of people born in the same place, as the original meaning of the English word *nation* stems from the Latin verb nāscī (meaning to be born).[244] Instead of regarding nations and nationalism as rational products of industrial society, primordialists believe rather that nations are a natural and ancient part of humanity and individuals in a community have a natural association with their common forbears. For example, Connor described a nation as "a group of people who believe they are ancestrally related."[245] Pierre van den Berghe agreed that nationalism is a result of racial connections and "extended and attenuated form of kin selection."[246] In other words, national identities emphasise the importance of common ancestry.

Ethno-symbolists addressed the significance of symbols, traditions, and myths when modern nations were established. To some extent, this perspective has usually been considered as a "moderate faction" between the first two scholarly opinions. This approach maintains that nations are still modern products, yet they also have pre-modern origins and inherent collective symbols that can be directly linked to "time immemorial."[247] As a foremost ethno-symbolist, Anthony D. Smith's attempted to address the importance of reinterpreting and rediscovering national cultures in the process of shaping a nation instead of conceptualizing a nation as a result of mere invention. Smith also believed that nations stem from *ethnies*, which he described as "named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity."[248] In other words, this *ethnies* can be regarded as a nascent form of a collective sentiment that eventually grew into a national identity.

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[244] Oxford Dictionary, "Definition of Nation in English," accessed in July 13, 2018, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nation.
[245] Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, Nj: Princeton University Press, 1994).
[246] Pieter Vanden Berghe, "A Social-Biological Perspective" in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 79.
[247] Anthony D. Smith, "The Myth of the 'Modern Nation' and the Myths of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 11, no.1 (1988), 1-26.
[248] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 32.

Therefore, according to Smith in his book *National Identity*, a nation is "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members."[249] Smith's student Hutchinson further described nations as "quasi-kinship groups, regulated by myths of common descent, a sense of shared history, and a distinctive culture."[250] This also resonates with Guibernau's definition of a nation: "a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself."[251]

To sum up, primordialists regard the nation as a natural collective group that is grounded in primordial ties including blood, language, and ancestors. Ethno-symbolists hold that nations are closely related to cultural roots; however, they are not "primordial" but rather "perennial" in terms of constancy and consciousness. Modernists, on the other hand, believe that nations are mainly products of modernity and industrialism. However, it is also necessary to observe that these three approaches to nations and nationalism are sometimes disputed yet overlapping. Based on the three different schools of understanding about nations and nationalism, I would like to identify three main typologies of nationalism as follows.

4.2 Typologies of nationalism

According to various understandings of nations and nationalism, they can be manifested and interpreted in different forms and types. These concepts can also present themselves in different aspects, such as civic, ethnic, economic, cultural, religious, and ideological ones.[252] Here I will briefly introduce three types of nationalism: civic nationalism, cultural nationalism, and ethnic nationalism.

Civic nationalism

[249] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1993), 14.
[250] John Hutchinson, "Nations and culture" in *Understanding Nationalism* ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001): 75.
[251] Montserrat Guibernau, *Nationalisms* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996): 47-48.
[252] Mark Juergensmeyer, "The Worldwide Rise of Religious Nationalism," *Journal of International Affairs* 50, no. 1, (1996): 1-20.

Civic nationalism is characterized by group members seeking to realize a certain political value. A political identity forms in a nation state around mutual citizenship.[253] Jürgen Habermas suggested that it is not appropriate to demand that individuals who have migrated to a civic nation must assimilate to the so-called mainstream culture of the nation, but rather that they must "assent to the principles of the constitution within the scope of interpretation determined at a particular time."[254] Brian Barry argued for a standardized definition of citizenship on universal grounds that all people enjoy "the same legal and political rights," regardless of one's background.[255] Kohn also regarded a civic nation as "a political community of citizens with equal rights and duties" in which individuals could have free access to the membership of the nation, on the condition that they are committed to stay loyal to the political ideals and institutions that reflect the values and objectives of the nation.[256] This is more inclusive than ethnic nationalism.[257]

Ethnic nationalism

Ethnic nationalism is a type of nationalism that describes a nation on the basis of ethnicity. The primary characteristic of ethnic nationalists is that they argue that "nations are defined by a shared heritage, which usually includes a common language, a common faith, and a common ethnic ancestry."[258] Ethnic nationalism is created through a shared ethnic identity that is the cornerstone of the nation and the political system. This suggests that a nation is not characterized by political unity but by ethnic unity. This means that, under ethnic nationalism, the government must affiliate with one ethnic group and be considered representative of it. This also means that people who do not fall into this ethnic group are classified as strangers and are likely to be excluded or discriminated against. In an ethnic-national society, immigrants are required to completely integrate into the main culture and surrender any sense of ethnic identity.

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[253] For recent definitions of "civic" nationalism, see Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1993), 5-9; Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 79-109; Andrew Mason, *Community, Solidarity, and Belonging* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 115-47; Anna Stilz,"Civic Nationalism and Language Policy," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37, no. 3 (Summer, 2009): 257-92.

[254] Jürgen Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic State," in *Inclusion of the Other,* ed. Ciaran Cronin and Pablo de Greiff (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998): 228.

[255] Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality* (Oxford: Wiley, 2013), 7.

[256] Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism, A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944)

[257] Jan Germen Janmaat, "Popular Conceptions of Nationhood in Old and New European Member States: Partial Support for the Ethnic-Civic Framework," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 1 (2006): 50-78.

[258] Jerry Z. Muller, "Us and Them: The Enduring Power of Ethnic Nationalism," *Foreign Affairs,* 87, no. 2 (Mar. - Apr. 2008): 18-35.

Even then, they still have a chance of being viewed as outsiders. Therefore, this form of nationalism is, to some extent, more conservative than civic nationalism.[259]

Cultural nationalism

The two types of nationalism presented above actually follow an ethnic-civic framework suggested by Hans Kohn.[260] Cultural nationalism, however, is a form of nationalism that attempts to jump out of this framework. It distinguishes itself from ethnic and civic nationalism with an emphasis on the role of culture rather than a belief in shared ancestry or the commitment to a political structure.[261] As Smith suggested, this cultural dimension of nationalism, including myths, symbols, memories, and values, plays an essential role in the process of (re)constructing a modern nation.[262]

To conclude, civic nationalism takes a modernist perspective; it is "voluntaristic, rational and activist."[263] Ethnic nationalism, on the contrary, implies that individuals cannot choose for themselves but belong to the nation inherently, since they share a common root and heritage. Cultural nationalism seems to take the middle ground and regards culture as the most important element shaping people's national identity. However, in practice, nationalism appears as a result of an amalgam of various versions of the concept that are not mutually exclusive. Many national sentiments and movements have combined several categories of nationalism at the same time.[264] Therefore, it is necessary to understand that a national identity may contain at least three dimensions of nationalism (including political, ethnic, and cultural), and to avoid the possible risks of dichotomy.

4.3 Introduction to the Chinese nation and nationalism

[259] Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).
[260] Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*.
[261] See for example, Anthony, D. Smith.
[262] See for example, Anthony D. Smith, "State-Making and Nation-Building," in *States in History*, ed. John A. Hall (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986): 228-63; Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991).
[263] Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*.
[264] Oliver Zimmer, "Boundary Mechanisms and Symbolic Resources: Towards a Process-Oriented Approach to National Identity," *Nations and Nationalism* 9, no. 2 (2003): 173-193.

James Harrison said, as quoted by Townsend, that he had observed that "the traditional Chinese self-image has generally been defined as 'culturalism', based on a common historical heritage and acceptance of shared beliefs, not as nationalism, based on the modern concept of the nation-state."[265] It seems that it has been widely accepted among modernist scholars that the modern concept of Chinese nationalism did not occur until the late Qing Dynasty (1841-1912) after China was defeated in the first Opium War, and especially after the Sino-Japanese War in 1894–1895, which became the start of China's "century of humiliation."[266]

Prior to the nineteenth century, China was an empire with a sense of cultural identity based on a Confucian cultural structure and the imperial order of *Tianxia* 天下 (all under heaven or the universe). Although China was once ruled by "barbarians" like Mongols and Manchus, this was appropriate because the Confucian culture was still adopted. However, the Empire could not claim its cultural superiority any longer after being defeated by Japan, its former tributary state, and the Western powers. With the introduction of the concepts of nationalism and social Darwinism, Chinese intellectuals' worldview started to be questioned, which caused them fall in a deep intellectual crisis. According to Joseph Levenson, this was the reason for the "intellectual alienation from traditional Chinese culture,"[267] which offered the content for later Chinese nationalism and the pursuit of a Chinese national identity or "nation-state" in order to guide China to survive the international competition in a world characterized by imperialism and social Darwinism.[268] For example, the most prominent nationalist, Liang Qichao (1873-1929), believed that it was a lack of nationalism and the conception of a "nation" that caused China's weakness while confronting the Western powers.[269]

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[265] James Harrison, *Modern Chinese Nationalism*, Hunter College of the City of New York, Research Institute of Modern Asia, 1969, 2, quoted by James Townsend, "Chinese Nationalism," in *Chinese Nationalism* ed. John Unger (Armonk, NY, M.E: Sharpe, 1996), 98.

[266] Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "The Many Facets of Chinese Nationalism," *China Perspectives*, (May - June 2005):59, accessed July 12, 2018, http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/2793; Prasenjit Duara, "De-Constructing the Chinese Nation," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 30 (1993): 1-26.

[267] Joseph Levinson believed that Chinese intellectuals at the time renounced Confucianism in the wake of China's forced opening to the West. For an opposing view, cf. Axel Schneider, "Nation, History and Ethics: The Choices of Post-Imperial Historiography in China," in: *Transforming History: The Making of a Modern Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China*, ed. Brian Moloughney and Peter Zarrow (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011), 271–302.

[268] John Fitzgerald, "The Nationless State: The Search for a Nation in Modern Chinese Nationalism," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 33, (1995):75-104.

[269] Zhitian Luo 罗志田, "Tianxia yu shijie: Qingmo renshi guanyu renlei shehui renzhi de zhuanbian-cezhong Qiang qichao de guannian" 天下与世界:清末士人关于人类社会认知的转变——侧重梁启超的观念 [From Tian Xia to the World: Changes in Late Qing Intellectuals' Conceptions of the Human Society- focsing on Liang Qichao's idea], *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中国社会科学 05 (2007): 192-205.

However, I also agree with Anthony D. Smith that, although the Chinese nation was born with modernity, it was not purely invented or imagined; instead, it was reconstructed based on certain traditions and histories. As Smith argued, although there are various ways to decode the past, it is not "any past" but "the past" of "that particular community, with its distinctive patterns events, personages and milieu," that places constraints on the type and extent of the manipulation by elites on their path to invent a national history and memories.[270] The imagination of a nation is therefore confined by the particular past of a certain group. Shen is also not mistaken that Chinese intellectuals recollected certain traditions and legends to (re)establish the imagination of the nation[271] (e.g. the legend of the Yellow Emperor as a symbol of national identification: it was said that all inhabitants living in China in the late Qing dynasty were the descendants of the Yan 炎 and Huang 黄, or Yanhuang zisun 炎黄子孙 in Chinese). Through this "discursive formation,"[272] China was (re)constructed as a modern nation-state.[273]

Furthermore, Chinese nationalism was not only shaped through the "foreign Other" like Japan and the West, but also shaped by its "domestic Other", the former "barbarians" who later became China's "ethnic minorities" (*shaoshu minzu* 少数民族).[274] Liang has differentiated between a narrow nationalism (*xiao minzu zhuyi* 小民族主义) and a broad nationalism (*da minzu zhuyi* 大民族主义). The former indicates that the Han race/ethnicity was regarded as the only legitimate Chinese group, whereas the latter means that the Han were united with different ethnic groups to fight against the "foreign Other." Early Han leaders of Republican China (1912-1949) insisted on uniting all the peoples of the former Qing empire in order to

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[270] Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed?" *Journal of International Studies*, 20, no.3 (1991): 358.

[271] See Songqiao Shen 沈松侨, "Jin dai zhongguo minzuzhuyi de fazhan: jianlun minzuzhuyi de linage wenti" 近代中国民族主义的发展：兼论民族主义的两个问题 [The Development of the Chinese Modern Nationalism], *Zhengshi shehui zhexue pinglun* 政治社会哲学评论, 3 (2002); "Wo yi wo xue jian Xuanyuan—— Huangdi shenhua yu wanqing guozu jiangou" 我以我血荐轩辕——皇帝神话与晚清的国族建构 [I Sacrificed My Blood to Xuanyuan- the Construction of Empirical Myth and National-hood Construction in the Late Qing], *Taiwan Shehui Yanjiu jian*, 台湾社会研究季刊, 28 (1997), 1-77.

[272] Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[273] Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-state by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism.* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); On the transfer of the nation concept to China, see Matten, Marc Andre, *Die Grenzen des Chinesischen: Nationale Identitätsstiftung im China des 20. Jahrhunderts*.(Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz-Verlag Shen, 2009); Songqiao Shen 沈松侨, "Zhen dahan zhi tiansheng—minzu yingxiong xipu yu wanqing de guozu xiangxiang" 振大汉之天声——民族英雄系谱与晚清的国族想象 [Raise the Voice of Great Han— the filiation of National Heroes the National Imagination of the Late Qing Dynasty], *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishisuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史所集刊, 33 June (2006).

[274] James Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

fight against the "foreign Others." Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, utilized the term of *Zhonghua minzu* (中华民族) to rally a collective and united "Chinese nation."[275]

However, not every group has easily shared the aim of consolidating the various groups of people within the Chinese territory: different ethnic views have brought and still produce conflicts in China, especially in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia. The concepts of Chinese and non-Chinese are also complicated. In the Chinese language, various terms are applied to describe racial, cultural, ethnic, and political attributes (*zhongguoren* 中国人, *zhonghua minzu* 中华民族, *huaren* 华人, *huayi* 华裔, *huaqiao* 华侨, *tangren* 唐人, and so on) and thus the English term "Chinese" alone unfortunately cannot define the complex characteristics of the Chinese identity.

Lastly, nationalism was considered a "moving force" of the Chinese revolution,[276] and it has been through several stages.[277] The founding of the CCP and the People's Republic of China have been believed to be a result of Chinese nationalism instead of being purely established based on the communist ideology.[278] It has been argued that, when Mao stood on the Tiananmen Gate on the first of October, 1949, the founding day of a "new China", and announced passionately that "Chinese people have stood up from now on,"[279] this was an obvious sign that the CCP was appealing to nationalism instead of communism in order to mobilise its people.[280]

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[275] James Leibold, "The *minzu* Net: China's Fragmented National Form," *Nations and Nationalism*, 22, no.3 (2016): 426. But before Sun utilized the concept "Chinese nation," he believed in Han-Chinese chauvinism.

[276] Mary Clabaugh Wright, "Introduction: The Rising Tide of Change" in *China in Revolution: The First Phase* 1900-1913, ed. Wright (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 3.

[277] See for example, Shameer Modongal, "Development of nationalism in China," *Cogent Social Sciences* 2, (2016), 2. Modongal divided the development as four stages after May Forth, 1919 to stress the characteristics of each period, i.e. socialist-oriented state control nationalism (1949-1979-Mao's period), liberal nationalism (1979-1989-liberal nationalism), state-led patriotic nationalism (after 1989); Songqiao Shen 沈松侨, "Jindai Zhongguo minzu zhuyi de fazhan: jianlun minzu zhuyi de linage wenti" 近代中国民族主义的发展：兼论民族主义的两个问题 [The Development of the Chinese Modern Nationalism], *Zhengshi shehui zhexue pinglun* 政治社会哲学评论, 3 (2002); See also Ying Jiang, *Cyber-nationalism in China Challenging Western Media Portrayals of Internet Censorship in China* (North Terrace: University of Adelaide Press, 2012).

[278] Wu Xu, *Chinese Cyber Nationalism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007); Benjamin Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the rise of Mao* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA: 1951).

[279] Zedong Mao 毛泽东, "Zhongguo renmin zhongyu zhanqilai le", 中国人民站起来了[Chinese People finally stood up], *The Selection of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 5, (Shanghai: Renmin zhubanshe,1977), 3-7.

[280] Songqiao Shen 沈松侨, "Jin dai Zhongguo minzuzhuyi de fazhan: jianlun minzuzhuyi de linage wenti" 近代中国民族主义的发展：兼论民族主义的两个问题 [The Development of the Chinese Modern Nationalism], *Zhengshi shehui zhexue pinglun* 政治社会哲学评论, 3 (2002); Zhao Suisheng, "A State-Led Nationalism: The

However, the trend of nationalism attenuated from the late 1950s to the early 1970s since Mao's political campaign promoted its official ideology of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.[281] In the post-Mao era, with Deng Xiaoping's economic reform, the official ideology of communism was pushed aside. *Sanxin weiji* 三信危机 (three belief crises—the crisis of faith in socialism, the crisis of belief in Marxism, and the crisis of trust in the Party) among the Chinese people emerged in the early 1980s.[282] Therefore, the rapid decline of communist ideology within China became one of the contributors to a re-emergence of nationalism in China.

4.4 State-led nationalism after 1989[283]

The failure of the global communist movement and the disintegration of the Soviet Union contributed to the growth and development of nationalism in Eastern European countries.[284] In relation to the worldwide decline of communist ideology, the CCP's legitimacy has been challenged too. Especially after the Tian'anmen Incident[285] happened in 1989, the CCP was startled.[286] In order to confront this challenge, the CCP re-emphasised the ideology of nationalism instead of communism in its discourse.[287]

It is also interesting to note that the official narrative of nationalism is a synonym of "patriotism" or "*aiguo zhuyi"* (爱国主义) in Chinese, which literally refers to "love-country-ism." But why

Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 287-302.

[281] Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 287-302.

[282] X. L Ding, *The Decline of Communism in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[283] I borrowed this term from Suisheng Zhao who cited Charles Tilly, see "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 287-302; see also Charles Tilly, "States and Nationalism in Europe 1492-1992," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (1994): 131-146.

[284] Brzezinski Zbigniew, "Post-Communist Nationalism," *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 5 (1989): 1-25.

[285] In Mainland China, there are different words officially used to refer to what happened in 1989, such as *dongluan* 动乱 (turmoil), *fengbo* 风波 (disturbance), and *xuechao* 学潮 (student upheaval), and, in an English context, it was also well known as the "Tiananmen massacre." I chose *incident* for its relatively neutral tone.

[286] Allen Carlson, "A Flawed Perspective: The Limitations Inherent within the Study of Chinese Nationalism 1," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 1 (2009): 20-35.

[287] Zheng Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and The Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2008): 783-806.

does the CCP prefer to term the ideology of nationalism as "patriotism"?[288] There are two reasons at least for this. Firstly, it has been argued that this reluctance has been due to this ideology's "links with the Communist International": although nationalism has always been a critical element of CCP's official discourse, it has never been openly endorsed by the CCP.[289] "Patriotism" (*aiguo zhuyi)* was, on the other hand, believed to be "more easily reconcilable than nationalism."[290]

Secondly, the modern Chinese state has multiple "nations" (*minz* 民族), and "Nationalism" (*minzu zhuyi* 民族主义) means nation-ism or ethnic-group-ism in Chinese.[291] The CCP prefers the term "patriotism" in order to form a single Chinese nation. As Kao noted, "Nationalism is a less acceptable term to Beijing leaders, as it may arouse nationalistic fervour among the fifty-five minority groups, each clamouring for its own identity. Patriotism is a more acceptable non-political notion to the Chinese central government as it helps the people focus on problems and challenges, they shared in common."[292]

In short, in the Chinese official discourse, there seems to be a clear distinction between "benign patriotism" and "malign nationalism."[293] Patriotism (*aiguo zhuyi* 爱国主义) is applied to describe the state-led ideology, whereas nationalism (*minzu zhuyi* 民族主义) "contains the belief in the superiority of one's country over other countries"[294] and seldom is used to discuss any activities endorsed by the Chinese regime. In other words, the word "nationalism" is repudiated because it applies "a parochial, reactionary sentiment," while "patriotism" is accepted as it can encourage individuals' support for the Chinese state and the CCP.[295] As

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[288] Regarding theoretical differences between nationalism and patriotism, see Anthony D. Smith, "History and National Destiny: Responses and Clarifications," *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 1-2 (2004): 200.
[289] Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 290.
[290] Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "The Many Facets of Chinese Nationalism," *China Perspectives* [Online], 59, May-June 2005, http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/2793.
[291] Ane Bislev and Xing Li, "Conceptualizing the Cultural and Political Facets of "Chinese Nationalism" in an Era of China's Global Rise," *International Communication of Chinese Culture* 1, no. 1-2 (2014): 21-33, doi:10.1007/s40636-014-0002-x.
[292] Chen Kao, "Patriotism Different from Nationalism," *The Straits Times,* Singapore, July 17, 1996, 11.
[293] Daniel Druckman, "Nationalism, Patriotism, and Group Loyalty: A Social Psychological Perspective," Mershon International Studies Review 38, no. 1 (1994): 64.
[294] Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Qingmin Zhang, Crowson, H. Michael and Huajian Cai, "Patriotism, Nationalism and China's US Policy: Structures and Consequences of Chinese National Identity," *The China Quarterly*, 205, March (2011):1–17.
[295] Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 290.

Zhang tried to argue, for the CCP, "Chinese patriotism" is never equal to "parochial nationalism."[296]

That is to say, the boundary between the state and the CCP seems ambiguous. The CCP is presented as the manifestation of a national will, and hence deserving of the same status as the state itself.[297] The CCP itself is synonymous with the "nation," and ultimately the object of patriotic sentiments. Under such a structure, critiques of the CCP would translate into unpatriotic gestures, while disagreement with the regime would be regarded as a betrayal of the country.[298] Therefore, in order to retain the power to define "patriotism," the CCP made it the focus of political education that to be inculcated via a countrywide campaign called Patriotic Education.

Compared with the other ideological re-education campaigns in the history of the CCP, the new campaign of "Patriotic Education" was considered remarkable due to its "scope and ambition."[299] The campaign, which began in the 1990s, attempted to recalibrate the young Chinese generation's political attitude toward the West and the CCP's leadership in a major way. In other words, Patriotic Education was to redefine the legitimacy of the CCP in the post-Tian'anmen age and enable the CCP to continue to reign, building on a non-communist ideology and regaining political support from young people, as well as lending social stability to a system that was already fraught with internal and external problems.[300]

4.5 The initiating progress of the Patriotic Education Campaign

Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) addressed the issue of the "lack of ideology education" in China within a week after the Tian'anmen Incident in 1989: "[…] the biggest mistake is education

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[296] Jian Zhang 张健, "Aiguo zhuyin bu dengyu minzu zhuyi " 爱国主义不等于狭隘民族主义[Patriotism is not equal to parochial nationalism], *Zhongguo guochangdang xinwen wang,* [The Internet News of the Chinese Communist Party], accessed July 8, 2018. http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0818/c40531-28646290.html.
[297] Zhao, 1998, 291.
[298] Rachel Gary,"Angry Youth: Patriotic Education and the New Chinese Nationalism," Honors Program Theses (Tacoma: University of Puget Sounds. 2012), 20.
[299] Zheng Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no.4 (2008):784.
[300] Rachel Gary, "Angry Youth: Patriotic Education and the new Chinese nationalism," Honors Program Theses (Tacoma: University of Puget Sounds, 2012), 20.

[...] regarding what China is and what China will be. This kind of education has been very little, which was a big mistake."[301]

In order to rectify this "mistake," the CCP launched the Patriotic Education Campaign (*aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu* 爱国主义教育). On May 3, 1990, about one year after the Tian'anmen Incident, Deng Xiaoping's successor, Jiang Zemin (1926-), made the first public announcement about patriotism. In his speech "Patriotism and the Mission of Intellectuals in Our Nation,"[302] Jiang clarified how China ought to practice patriotism in the new era to defend socialism.[303] In March 1991, Jiang wrote a letter to Li Tieying, the then director of the State Education Commission (renamed the Ministry of Education in 1998), which was published in the People's Daily, to initiate a national program to enhance political education. This letter was also regarded as a direct response to Deng's earlier speech in 1989.[304]

After Jiang's letter, on April 19, 1991, the State Education Commission called on primary and secondary schools to conduct their patriotic education activities.[305] In August 1991, another two patriotism-related documents were issued: "Notice on the Full Utilisation of Cultural Relics for Education on Patriotism and Revolutionary Traditions" and "General Outline for Strengthening Education on Modern and Contemporary Chinese History and National Conditions in Primary and Secondary Schools."[306] These two documents required that schools

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[301] Xiaoping Deng 邓小平,"Zai jiejian shoudu jieyan buduijun yishang ganbu shi de jianghua"(June, 9, 1989) 在接见首都戒严部队军以上干部时的讲话 [The Talk with Cadres of Army to Enforce the Martial Law in the Capital City], in *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan* 3 邓小平文选 3 [The Selection of Deng Xiaoping3]. (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993), 306.

[302] Zemin Jiang 江泽民, "Aiguo zhuyin he woguo zhishifenzi de shiming" 爱国主义和我国知识分子的使命 [Patriotism and the Mission of intellectuals in our country], *Zhonguo ribao* 中国日报, May 4, 1990, A01.

[303] Ibid.

[304] Zemin Jiang 江泽民"Zhi Li Tieying, He Dongchang tongzhi de xin (1991nian 3 yue 9 ri)" 致李铁映、何东昌同志的信[The letter to Comrade Li Tieying and He Dongchang (March 9 1991)], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, June 1, 1991.

[305] State Education Commission, 国家教委"Guojia jiaowei guanyu zai zhongxiaoxue jinyibu kaizhan aiguozhuyi jiaoyu huodong de yijian" 国家教委关于在中小学进一步开展爱国主义教育活动的意见[The Notice of Further Activities of Patriotic Education in Secondary Schools and Primary Schools from the State Education Commission], April 25, 1991, http://www.gdjyw.com/jyfg/15/law_15_1181.htm, accessed July 18, 2018.

[306] CPC Central Committee 中共中央, "Guanyu chongfen yunyong wenwu jinxing aiguozhuyi he gaming chuantong jianyu de tongzhi"关于充分运用文物进行爱国主义和革命传统教育的通知[Notice on the Full Utilisation of Cultural Relics for Education on Patriotism and Revolutionary Traditions], August 28, 1991, http://fgcx.bjcourt.gov.cn:4601/law?fn=chl338s826.txt, accessed July 18, 2018; Chinese Ministry of Education 中国教委 "Zhongxiaoxue jiaqiang Zhongguo jindai, xiandaishi ji guoqing jiaoyu de zongti gangyao" 中小学加强中国近代、现代史及国情教育的总体纲要[General Outline for Strengthening Education on Modern and Contemporary Chinese History and National Conditions in Primary and Secondary Schools], (Beijing, Renmin jianyun chubanshe:1991).

boost their pupils' national pride by teaching them about how the CCP successfully led China to protect itself against foreign invasions. The students were also indoctrinated with the notion of the continued existence of international hostile forces intent on destroying modern China. In this way, educating the younger generation to resist "peaceful evolution" from the West became a fundamental task for all schools.[307]

The patriotic education campaign was fully implemented in August 1994, after three years of preparation, when the Propaganda Department of the CCP issued the Outline for Implementing Patriotic Education (*aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu shishi gangling* 爱国主义教育实施纲领).[308] This outline described the goal of the campaign as "to invigorate the national spirit, strengthen national cohesion, build national pride and self-esteem, consolidate and develop the broadest patriotic united front, guide and unite the patriotic enthusiasm of the masses in the great cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, guide and unite them in making contributions to the unification, prosperity and strength of the motherland."[309] As Callahan indicated, this campaign sought to redirect the focus of the younger generation from internal to external issues: "A patriotic education policy was formulated not so much to re-educate the youth (as it was in the past), as to redirect protest toward the foreigner as an enemy, as an external Other."[310]

Furthermore, this outline revealed that, while patriotic education was applied to the entire country when it was fully implemented, it addressed the younger generation in particular. Due to its concentration on young people, the whole education system, from kindergarten to university, had to turn classrooms into pulpits for promoting students' national spirit. In addition to school students, the goal was to include young soldiers, cadres, workers, and farmers from all sectors in China. There were also gatherings to address patriotism in various government agencies, businesses, research institutes, local councils, and villages.[311]

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[307] Ibid.
[308] Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, Aiguozhuyi jiaoyu shishi gangyao 爱国主义教育实施纲领 [Outline on the implementation of patriotic education], in *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo jiaoyu fa quanshu* 中华人民共和国教育法全书 [Complete education laws of the People's Republic of China], ed. Qijia Guo, 117–122. (Beijing: Beijing guangdong xueyuan chubanshe, 1995).
[309] Ibid, 117.
[310] William Callahan, "History, Identity and Security: Producing and Consuming Nationalism in China," *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no.2 (2006):179-208.
[311] Zhao, 1998, 295.

4.6 The contents of the Patriotic Education Campaign

While the prime goal of the Patriotic Education Campaign was to urge the Chinese people to support the CCP leadership, its contents were nevertheless not very communist. To some extent, the campaign intentionally blurred the boundaries between patriotism, nationalism, and socialism under the "great practice of the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics." Patriotic Education was regarded as "the cornerstone of a socialist spiritual civilization and patriotism replaced communism as 'the common spiritual pillar' of the Chinese people and 'the powerful spiritual force that supports the Chinese people.'"[312]

One of the most essential elements of the patriotic education campaign was to improve the familiarity of China's younger generation with the "Century of Humiliation" narrative (*bainian chiru* 百年耻辱).[313] The "Century of Humiliation" refers to the period beginning with the invasion of China by the West and Japan in the late Qing Dynasty and ending with the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.[314] This narrative centres on the brutality of foreign powers and the misery of Chinese suffering. It became an essential resource for the CCP in legitimatising its rule since the narrative repeatedly reminded its audience that it was under the leadership of the CCP that China has ended this "humiliation."[315] That is to say, the patriotic education campaign aimed at conveying to young people in China the humiliating experience of encountering Western and Japanese invasions and then educating them that it was the CCP that led China to end this national humiliation. In this way, an "aggrieved nationalism," to use Geremie Barmé's term, was expected to be constructed through patriotic education.[316]

To justify China's national experience during the century of humiliation, the CCP applied the political theory of "backwardness incurs beating by others" (*luohou jiuyao aida* 落后就要挨

[312] Zhao, 2004, 296.
[313] William Callahan, "National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, And Chinese Nationalism," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 29, no. 2 (2004): 199-218.
[314] Although Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong's opinions on the exact time of the end of the "century of humiliation" are slightly different. Here I chose Mao's declaration.
[315] Zheng Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2008): 789, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2478.2008.00526.x.
[316] Geremie R. Barmé, "China's flat earth: history and 8 August 2008," *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 67–68.

打). This theory was also applied to explain why the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has been an enduring goal:

> *History and reality tell us that backwardness incurs beatings by others. Only through developments can rejuvenation be realized. China was bullied by foreign powers in modern times. A major reason for that was that China was chronically poor and weak during that period. Since then, the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has become the unswerving goal that each Chinese generation has striven to realize.*[317]

In other words, the main contents of the campaign were building up Chinese national pride by creating a sense of crisis among the Chinese people and trying to convince them that international "hostile forces" were doing everything possible to stop the development of China. The campaign told the Chinese people, especially the younger generation, that without strong leadership from the CCP to fight these plots, China would collapse.[318] Therefore, the campaign was "not merely an attempt to foster patriotism in general but to establish a certain definition of patriotism."[319] Its ultimate goal was to convince the younger generation that they could only love and defend their country under the leadership of the CCP.

4.6.1 New curriculum under the Patriotic Education Campaign

In order to better foster young people's patriotic sentiments and loyalty toward the regime, the CCP considered it essential to conduct a significant curriculum revision in schools and attach more political education to various subjects. In 1991, the Education Commission released the "The Outline of Ideological and Political Education in Chinese Language in Primary and Middle Schools," and it released "The Outline of Ideological and Political Education in History of Primary and Secondary Schools" in 1992.[320]

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[317] Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014):132.
[318] Zhao, 1998, 298.
[319] Karl Gustafsson, "Is Patriotism Distinct from Nationalism? The Meaning of 'Patriotism' in China in the 2000s," *Working Papers in Contemporary Asian Studies* 42 (2014):18.
[320] *Zhongxiaoxue yuwen xueke sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu gangyao* 中小学语文学科思想政治教育纲要[The Outline of Ideological and Political Education in Chinese Language in Primary and Middle Schools], The Education Commission, 1991; *Zhongxiaoxue lishi xueke sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu gangyao* 中小学历史学科思想政治教育纲要[The Outline of Ideological and Political Education in History of Primary and Secondary Schools], The Education Commission, 1992.

Take the subject of history, for example: new editions of middle and high school history textbooks were published after both of the outlines were issued.[321] In the new textbooks, Chinese pre-modern history was romanticized as "Five Thousand Years of Splendid Chinese History." The time from the Opium Wars to the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1840–1949) was titled "The Humiliation of More than a Century of Invasion and the Struggle to Save the Country from Destruction," a title that highlighted the immorality of Western imperialism instead of feudalism. That is to say, the "patriotic narrative" replaced the former "class struggle narrative": for example, the Taiping Rebellion and the ideological and political conflict between the Nationalist Party (KMT) and the CCP were no longer important content.[322] The content of *Chinese Modern and Contemporary History* was prolonged from one semester to two semesters, whereas the other history courses, such as *Chinese Ancient History* and *World Modern and Contemporary History*, became elective courses with many fewer learning hours.[323]

The Education Commission also published a series of extracurricular compulsory readings for primary and secondary school pupils, which focused on the "century of humiliation." Most of the patriotic stories chosen as examples in the textbooks were based in the conflict between Chinese and foreign Western powers. For example, there were several highlighted stories about Chinese scientists and scholars who had studied in the West and returned to China in order to make a contribution to the motherland, despite the better material comfort abroad for themselves then.[324]

Furthermore, the textbook required school pupils specifically "to consider the benefits of our motherland whatever we do. We should have self-respect when we communicate with foreigners. We cannot damage the glory of our motherland or the pride of our nation at any

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[321] *Gaoji Zhongxue keben zhongguo jixiandaishi* 高级中学课本近现代史[High School Textbook Chinese Modern and Contemporary History], (Beijing:Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe,1992); *Chuji Zhongxue jiaokeshu zhongguo lishi* 初级中学教科书中国历史[Middle School Textbook Chinese History], (Beijing: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992).

[322] Zheng Wang, "National humiliation, history education, and the politics of historical memory: Patriotic education campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.52, No.4 (2008):791.

[323] Shameer Modongal, "Development of Nationalism in China," *Cogent Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2016).

[324] For example, a story of a Chinese mathematician returned to China from the United States and told a British journalist that he decided to go back to China was not for his own benefit, but for his motherland, in *Sixiang zhengzhi chuzhong yinianji xia* 思想政治初中一年级下[Ideology and Politics middle school], (Beijing: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998): 72.

time. This is the national self-respect and confidence every Chinese should have."[325] Just as the Outline for Implementing Patriotic Education promoted, with the new curriculum, schools became the most critical frontline for educating the younger generation to devote themselves to their motherland.

4.6.2 Military training (*Junxun* 军训)

At the tertiary level, after the Tian'anmen Incident in 1989, military training (*Junxun* 军训) was given more emphasis in universities, even though it was not explicitly written into the Patriotic Education curriculum. New university students were forced to complete a full year of military training before studying on campuses such as Beijing University and Fudan University between 1989 and 1992. Since 2001, military training also became compulsory for all high school and university students.[326] The military training takes about two weeks and, during the training, the main goal is not really to educate the students to become military soldiers, but rather to encourage them to be "patriotic enthusiasts" and emphasise the "concept of discipline to the CCP."[327]

4.6.3 National symbols

The Patriotic Education Campaign also specifically appealed to special symbols such as the national flag, anthem, and emblem. The Chinese national flag is also known as the Five-Star Red Flag, with one larger star representing the CCP and four smaller ones around it representing Chinese people from four social classes; this symbolizes the unity of the Chinese people under the leadership of the CCP. To raise allegiance to the national flag for the younger generation, the Outline for Implementing Patriotic Education required local governments and schools to enforce the flag-raising program in a strict manner, in accordance with the standards

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[325] *Sixiang zhengzhi chuzhong yinianji xia* 思想政治初中一年级下[Ideology and Politics middle school], (Beijing: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998): 18.
[326] Ministry of Education, 教育部 *Guanyu zai putong gaodeng xuexiao he gaoji zhongxue kaizhan xuesheng junshi xunlian gongzuo de yijian* 关于在普通高等学校和高级中学开展学生军事训练工作的意见 [The opinion on carrying out the students military training in universities and high schools], May 29, 2001. http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2011-12/13/content_5838.htm, accessed July 26, 2018.
[327] Ibid.

laid down by the National Flag Law in 1990. For students in both primary and secondary schools, this kind of ceremony started to become a regular ritual for beginning a new school term, a new week, graduation, and sports meetings. There would also be a "theme talk" given by teachers or fellow students named "The Talk under the National Flag" (*guoqi xia jianghua* 国旗下讲话) to motivate the students to be more patriotic. Furthermore, the solemn flag-raising ceremony with the Tian'anmen Square Military Band has become one of the major events in Beijing for tourists and Beijing residents since the 1990s.

In addition to the flag-raising ceremony, singing the national anthem is regarded as a sacred act that allows citizens to express their patriotic sentiments. The lyrics of the Chinese national anthem, entitled "March of the Volunteer Army," reminds the Chinese people of their historical suffering and fuels nationalist resentment against the "foreign enemies":

> Arise, ye who refuse to be slaves!
> Take our flesh and blood and build our new Great Wall!
> The Chinese nation is at its most dangerous.
> Everyone was forced to let out a final roar.
> Arise! Arise! Arise!
> We are united, braving the enemy's artillery.
> March on!
> braving enemy fire.
> March on! March on! March On!

4.6.4 Constructing a social environment for Patriotic Education

In addition to the implementation of the new curriculum and military training in schools and universities, as well as the ritualization of the national symbols, the CCP continued to promote the patriotic education campaign by generating a supportive social atmosphere. In October 2004, a new document entitled "Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Work of Patriotic Education Bases" was issued.[328] This document encouraged all tourist spots, such as

[328] Ministry of Education, et al. 教育部, *guanyu jiaqiang he gaijin amigozhuyi jiaoyu jidi gongzuo de yijian* 关于加强和改进爱国主义教育基地工作的意见 [Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Work of Patriotic Education Bases], September 28, 2004.

museums, memorials, historical sites, cultural relics, conservation units, popular architecture sites, and even local community centres to "highlight their patriotic identities."[329]

At the same time, the Propaganda Department announced a lengthy list of recommendations for patriotic movies, songs, and books glorifying the CCP to be distributed to the public.[330] In China, 353 places have been announced patriotic education bases since 1997. Pupils and students have been organized to visit historical sites, such as the Memorial for Revolutionary Martyrs, to listen to reports on China's current situation, and to tour various museums.[331]

In 2006, the CCP launched a national campaign named "Eight Honours and Eight Shames" in order to establish the social moral code of "Honour" and "Shame." Among them, the first one was to "Honour those who love the motherland, and shame on those who harm the motherland."[332] Furthermore, holidays were also utilised to promote patriotic education, such as the Lunar New Year and national holidays like the National Day (October first), Labour Day (May first), Army Day (August first), the Party's Birthday (July first), etc.[333] In short, by keeping all these resources firmly in its hands, the CCP has created a favourable social climate for its patriotic education campaign and has immersed Chinese youth in this environment outside the classroom as well as inside it. In this way, CCP aimed to build young people's strong attachment to their country and restore their trust in the CCP.

4.7 The latest policies regarding Patriotic Education

After Xi Jinping took office in 2012, the CCP continued to emphasise the importance of patriotic education while updating its form to advance with the times. A notice that responded

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http://www.wenming.cn/ziliao/wenjian/jigou/zhongxuanbu/201203/t20120314_560494.s.html, accessed August 26, 2018.

329 Zhao, 2004, 221.

330 Propaganda Department, et al. 中宣部, *Aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu sange yiban mingdai,* 爱国主义教育*"*三个*100"*名单 [The list of "three hundred" of patriotic education], http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_364/moe_1172/moe_1202/tnull_20106.html, accessed August 26, 2018.

331 Zhao, 1998, 295.

332 Steven P. Camicia and Juanjuan Zhu, "Citizenship Education under Discourses of Nationalism, Globalization, and Cosmopolitanism: Illustrations from China and The United States," *Frontiers of Education in China* 6, no. 4 (2011): 602-619, doi:10.1007/s11516-011-0147-x.

333 Ibid, 296.

directly to a talk delivered by Xi Jinping in 2015,[334] released by the Ministry of Education in early 2016, encouraged schools to conduct patriotic education in creative ways.[335] The notice announced that "by deploying the Internet and new media, such as micro blogs and WeChat, schools should try to make patriotic education more vivid and appealing.[...] A good atmosphere should be created on campuses to ensure that students will feel the spread of the patriotic spirit all the time, whether they are in or out of class, online or offline."[336] On 12th November, 2019, the CCP published an outline for promoting patriotic education in the new era (*Xin Shidai Aiguo Zhuyi Jiaoyu Shishi Gangyao* 新时代爱国主义教育实施纲要), which reemphasized the essential role of the patriotic education campaign launched initially a quarter century ago.[337]

In order to win more young supporters, the CCP has developed various strategies to become young people's "cool friend" rather than a "rigid teacher." The Communist Youth League of China[338] has created official accounts on popular social media, such as Sina *Weibo*, WeChat, *Zhihu*, and *Bilibili.*[339] According to a report from *China Youth Daily*, there were already over 72,000 official accounts from different levels of Communist Youth Leagues on Sina *Weibo* in early 2017 that had attracted millions of young followers online.[340] In order to attract more young followers on these online platforms, the CCP also started to develop patriotic-related

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[334] Qiaosu Zhang, "Xi Jinping Hosted the 29th Collective Learning at Central Politburo of the Communist," *Xinhua News,* December 30, 2015, accessed July 6, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-12/30/c_1117631083.htm.

[335] Ministry of Education, Guanyu jiaoyu xitong shenru kaizhan aiguozhuyi jiaoyu de shishi yijian 关于教育系统深入开展爱国主义教育的实施意见[Opinion on Implementation of Education System' s in-Depth Development of Patriotism Education] http:/www.moe.edu.cn/srcsite/A13/s7061/201601/t20160129_229131.html**,** January, 26, 2016, accessed August 30, 2018.

[336] Ibid.

[337] The CCP Central Committee and the State Council, Xin Shidai Aiguo Zhuyi Jiaoyu Shishi Gangyao 新时代爱国主义教育实施纲要[Outline for Promoting Patriotic Education in the New Era]http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2019-11/12/content_5451352.htm, November, 12, 2019, accessed February 13, 2020.

[338] The Chinese Communist Youth League is a nationwide youth organisation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China for young people between the ages of 14 and 28.

[339] Sina *Weibo* is a Chinese Microblogging website launched in 2009; WeChat or *Weixin* is a multi-functional Chinese messaging, social media platform launched in 2011; *Zhihu* is a Chinese Q&A website from 2011 where a community of users creates, answers and organizes questions; *Bilibili* is a Chinese video sharing website featuring anime, manga, and game from 2010; Zhang Yaosheng, 张耀升, "Wanghong gong qing tuan zhongyang shi ruhe liancheng de" 网红"共青团中央"是如何炼成的 [How did "Communist Central Youth League of China Become the Internet Celebrity], http://media.sohu.com/20170103/n477653515.shtml, accessed August 30, 2018.

[340] Zheng Zhang, 章正, Bashi nianqian de gushing dadong nianqingren, 八十年前的故事打动年轻人[The story 80 years ago touched the young people], China Youth Daily, November 28, 2016, http://zqb.cyol.com/html/2016-11/28/nw.D110000zgqnb_20161128_3-01.htm, accessed August 30, 2018.

online games for the young people and showed support for patriotic-related cultural products, such as cartoons and pop music.

4.8 Patriotic Education for Chinese students abroad

The CCP has done significant efforts to rally Chinese citizens abroad, especially young students, under the banner of "patriotism" towards the motherland, in order to win their loyalty and sympathy.[341] Since the 18th National Congress, the returnee and study abroad policies have undergone several reforms. On the one hand, the central government has further emphasised the importance of patriotism in the introduction of talents. The central government has also encouraged Chinese students overseas to demonstrate China's achievements abroad and enhance China's soft power. On the other hand, the central government has paid attention to how to manage and use people who have returned to China. In his 2013 speech, Xi Jinping added the words "playing the role" (*Fahui zuoyong* 发挥作用) after the original 12-word principle for students who study abroad: "supporting study abroad, encouraging returning to China, and coming and going freely" (*zhichi liuxue, guli huiguo, laiqü ziyou* 支持留学、鼓励回国、来去自由). In response to this call, local governments have set up returnees' associations to concentrate on leading returnees in different institutions such as schools and private enterprises and enhancing connections between returnees and the CCP.

The CCP has also aimed to promote the Patriotic Education Campaign to Chinese students who study abroad, and they were included in making a contribution to Xi's "China Dream" (*Zhongguo meng* 中国梦)[342] of national revival. Xi's "China Dream" explicitly included Chinese students who study abroad in a system described as "a multidimensional contact network linking home and abroad — the motherland, embassies and consulates, Chinese

[341] Elena Barabantseva, "Trans-nationalising Chineseness: Overseas Chinese Policies of the PRC's Central Government," *ASIEN* 96 (July 2005): 7-28.

[342] "China Dream" is an ideological concept which was introduced by Xi's authorities in 2012. I am also aware that the term was also translated as *Chinese Dream*. The variation of the translations might contain contrasting meanings, e.g. "China Dream" implies that it is the dream of the country or the government, whereas "Chinese Dream" may imply that it is the dream of the people in China. However, this discussion is beyond the scope of the current study.

overseas student associations, and the broad number of students abroad."[343] The goal was to "assemble the broad numbers of students abroad as a positive patriotic energy."[344] In this way, the CCP hoped to "guide youthful students to establish and maintain correct views of history, the nation, state and culture" and "constantly enhance their sense of belonging to the Chinese nation."[345]

In this "multidimensional contact network," the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) abroad serves an important role in contributing to the patriotic education of Chinese students abroad. CSSA is the "official" organisation for Chinese students and scholars studying and researching abroad. The main tasks for the CSSA are normally to welcome Chinese students and scholars, assist them to settle in, offer them a supportive social network, and organize activities for Chinese festivals, etc.[346] However, since the Chinese consulates and embassies financially and politically support the association, it has sometimes been accused of being the "watchful eyes" of the CCP.[347]

In addition to the CSSA, there is also another association aimed at Chinese overseas students named the Western Returned Scholars Association/Chinese Overseas-Educated Scholars Association (WRSA/COESA). Compared to CSSA, which serves current Chinese students abroad, this association serves mainly those who have already graduated and returned to China. It is under the CCP's command and is directly guided by the United Front Work Department of the CCP.[348]

There are also publications that serve as patriotic education for Chinese overseas students. Two of the most important magazines are *Shenzhou Xueren (Chinese Scholars* 神州学人) and

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[343] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, *Opinion on Implementation of Education System' s In-Depth Development of Patriotism Education,* January 26, 2016, accessed July 7, 2018. http://www.moe.edu.cn/srcsite/A13/s7061/201601/t20160129_229131.html.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Chris Buckley, "China Says Its Students, Even Those Abroad, Need More 'Patriotic Education'," *New York Times*, February 10, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/11/world/asia/china-patriotic-education.html?_r=0, accessed July 07, 2018,
[346] Yajing Chen and Heidi Ross, "Creating A Home Away from Home": Chinese Undergraduate Student Enclaves in US Higher Education," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44, no. 3 (2015): 155-181, doi:10.1177/186810261504400307.
[347] Saul Stephanie, "On Campus Far from China, Still Under Beijing's Watchful Eye," *New York Times*, May 4, 2017,
https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/04/us/chinese-studentswestern-campuses-china-influence.html, accessed July 6, 2018.
[348] See its official website, http://www.wrsa.net.

Liuxuesheng (Overseas Students 留学生). *Shenzhou Xueren* is a monthly magazine, based in Beijing, which aims to reinforce the patriotic education of overseas students and to attract and encourage them to go back to China and work or serve their homeland abroad. It is under the leadership of the Chinese Ministry of Education. *Liuxuesheng* is organized by WRSA/COESA and is under the leadership of the CCP's United Front Work Department too.[349] In 2013, it changed from monthly to semi-monthly publication. The first half of the month aims at returnees in China while the second half focuses on current Chinese students abroad. On the one hand, these magazines provide valuable information for students about studying abroad and post-graduation opportunities; on the other hand, they are significant channels for the CCP to continue instilling patriotic education into Chinese students abroad, as Xi Jinping promoted in a widespread speech when he expressed his wishes for Chinese students abroad at the centennial celebration of WRSA/COESA in October 2013:

[...] *No matter where you are, you should always put your motherland and people in your heart, be a loyal defender and spreader of patriotism, and bear the fruit of individual success on the evergreen tree of patriotism.*[350]

4.9 The effects of the Patriotic Education Campaign

Before discussing the effect of the Patriotic Education Campaign on the generation who were born after the 1989 Tian'anmen Incident, it is worth noting the social climate for their parents' generation, which led the youth then to turn their outlook beyond the border of China and toward the West in the 1980s.[351] During the decade after the death of Mao Zedong and the end of the Cultural Revolution, young Chinese people began to reject and question their old beliefs and search instead for new ones. Following the policy of reform and opening up in 1978, young Chinese people then started to be exposed to the outside world and introduced to some Western

[349] The initial issue was published as early as 1920 titled "*Oumei Tongxuehui Cong Kan* (欧美同学会丛刊) or *Series Magazine of European- United States Student Association*. It changed its name to *Liuxuesheng* (留学生) or *Overseas Students* in 2002.

[350] Jinping Xi, "the Speech at the centennial celebration of WRSA/COESA," *CPC News,* October 21, 2013, accessed July 7, 2018. http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2013/1021/c64094-23277634.html.

[351] For an analysis of youth culture in the 1980s, see Luo Xu, Searching for Life's Meaning (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

ideas.[352] They were influenced by the Western ideas but were, at the same time, frustrated with the official Chinese ideology. The 1980s thus witnessed an age for liberal opinions with relative more freedom among Chinese youth. It became the trend for the generation in the 1980s to escape from state control and structure in order to seek individual freedom and pluralistic thought.[353] During this period, a cultural fever (*Wenhua re* 文化热)[354] swept China. Take, for example, the bold documentary "River Elegy" (*Heshang* 河觞), which aired on Chinese state television in 1988. It challenged the legitimacy of tradition, arguing that Mao, the faux "peasant emperor," had taken China astray, and China thus needed to turn back to the righteous path of history paved by the May Fourth Movement and continued to seek "science and democracy." It thus became a big hit among young people then, as the first Chinese documentary to condemn China's "backward" traditions and social issues in the 1980s.[355]

By contrast, the post-Tian'anmen generation, the young generation born in the late 1980s and 1990s, or "*balinghou*" and "*jiulinghou*" (literally meaning post-80s and post-90s), who went through Patriotic Education systematically, are quite different compared to the previous generation.[356] To adopt Alastair Iain Johnston's term, this generation is the "patriotic education generation."[357] Unlike some of their predecessors, "they are not actively pursuing democracy, as their counterparts did in Hong Kong in the fall of 2014, nor do they aim to topple the system, as was the case in the Arab Spring, nor do they publicly fight against corruption, as their predecessor did in 1989."[358] In other words, the young generation seems to be more supportive of the official patriotic narratives and docile toward the regime.[359]

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[352] See Xiaocong Guo, "Cong Xifang sichao dui daxuesheng de yingxiang fansi gaoxiao sixiang zhengzhi gongzhuo"从西方思潮对大学生的影响单丝高校思想政治工作 [With the influence of western ideas towards university students, we should reflect on the ideological-political work on the universities], Gaojiao Tanshuo (Investigation on University Education: January 1990):34-39; see also Yuanlong Zhang, "Xifang xueshu sichao yu dangdai daxuesheng xingtai" 西方学术思潮与当代大学生心态 Western academic thought and contemporary university student mindset), Sixiang lilun jiaoyu (Education in Ideology and Theory) (February 1990): 61-63.

[353] Yuanlong Zhang, "Xifang xueshu sichao yu dangdai daxuesheng xingtai" (Western academic thought and contemporary university student thinking), 61.

[354] Xudong Zhang, "On Some Motifs in the Chinese 'Cultural Fever' of the Late 1980s: Social Change, Ideology, and Theory," *Social Text*, no. 39 (1994): 129-56.

[355] Che-po Chan, "The Political Pragmatism of Chinese University Students:10 years after the 1989 Movement," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 8, no. 22, (1999):381-403.

[356] Stanley Rosen, "The Effect of Post-4 June Re-Education Campaigns on Chinese Students," *The China Quarterly* 134 (1993): 310.

[357] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Is Chinese Nationalism Rising? Evidence from Beijing," *International Security 41*, no. 3 (2017): 27.

[358] Jeroen de Kloet and Anthony Y. H Fung, *Youth Cultures in China* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).

[359] Maria Hsia Chang, "Chinese Irredentist Nationalism: The Magician's Last Trick," *Comparative Strategy* 17, no. 1 (1998): 85.

Although there is no direct evidence of a clear causal relationship, the Patriotic Education Campaign appears to be related to the concurrent emergence of youth-centered nationalism in the mid-1990s.[360] There has been a series of pro-China demonstrations held by a new generation of "angry youth" (*fenqing* 愤青)[361] after some incidents since then:[362] the Taiwan Strait crisis between 1995 and 1996, the U.S. attack on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, and the collision of spy aircrafts over the South China Sea in 2001.[363]

This trend of nationalism also led to the success of several nationalist best-sellers and in return promoted nationalism among youth. The best-known book *China Can Say No* (*Zhongguo keyi shuo bu*),[364] became a huge success, especially among young people. The book is a collection of impassioned articles about various views on China's international relations and domestic politics, mainly taking a tone of criticizing the United States and questioning Western hegemony. This book was followed by many other similar books such as *The Background of Demonizing China* (*Yaomohua Zhongguo de Beihou*) and *China's Path in the Shadow of Globalisation* (*Quanqiu yinying xia de Zhongguo zhi lu*).[365] The tremendous success of these books reflected their young readers' belief in a hostile international political environment in which the evil Westerners attempted to block China from reclaiming the power and influence it had a century ago.[366] Interestingly enough, thirteen years after the publication of *China Can Say No,* the authors promoted their second book, *China Is Not Happy*, which motivated

[360] Allen Carlson, "A Flawed Perspective: The Limitations Inherent within the Study of Chinese Nationalism 1," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 1 (2009): 20-35.; Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 287-302; Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State By Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[361] Lijun Yang and Yongnian Zheng, "Fen Qings (Angry Youth) in Contemporary China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no.76 (2012): 637–653.

[362] Geremie R. Barme, "To Screw Foreigners is Patriotic: China's Avant-Garde Nationalists," *The China Journal*, no. 34 (July 1995): 209-34.

[363] Simon Shen, *Redefining Nationalism in Modern China* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 71-101.

[364] Qiang Song 宋强 et al., *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* 中国可以说不 [China Can Say No], (Beijing: Zhonghua gongshang lianhe chubanshe, 1996).

[365] Different from the authors in *China Can Say No* who haven't lived in the West, especially the United States, the authors in this book are journalists and scholars who have lived in the United States; Xiguang Li and Kang Liu, 刘希光，刘康 *Yaomohua Zhongguo De Beihou* 妖魔化中国的背后 [*The Background of Demonizing China*] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1996); Ning Fang, Xiaodong Wang and Qiang Song, 房宁，王小东，宋强, *Quanqiuhua yinyingxia de Zhongguo Zhilu* 全球化阴影下的中国之路[China's Path in the Shadow of Globalisation] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexne, 1999).

[366] Ben Xu, "Chinese Populist Nationalism: Its Intellectual Politics and Moral Dilemma," *Representations* 76, no. 1 (2001): 151-162.

continuing nationalist flames after the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008.[367] This time, this best-seller urged the Chinese government to be more aggressive toward the West; it argued that China needed to apply its rising political power and economic strength to overtake the Western powers and become the world leader on the global stage.[368]

After China won the bid to host the Beijing Olympic Games and joined the WTO in the 21st century, with rapid economic and technological progress, the nationalist trend that began in the mid-1990s continued to develop. The post-Tian'anmen-born generation gradually started to appear on the nationalist stage after 2008, the year when China was hit by a massive snowstorm in January, followed by disruption of the Olympic touch relay overseas in April and the disaster of Sichuan Earthquake in May, before it hosted Beijing Olympics Games in August. This series of events during this year contributed to a new source of "national trauma" and "national victory" to enhance the legitimacy of the CCP's authority and the collective memory of a new generation.[369]

With the CCP's new strategies, which were combined with popular culture after Xi Jinping took power in 2012, it seems that more and more young people responded to the national narrative positively. In addition to the "angry youth" who represented a wave of masculine nationalism, e.g. attacking the US embassy in Beijing with rocks and overturning Japanese cars, a new trend has emerged in Chinese cyberspace since 2016.[370] There are many online "keyboard warriors," who call themselves "Little Pink" (*Xiaofenhong* 小粉红), are initially perceived as predominantly female, and are often seen online trying to guard against unwelcome opinions or criticism of China with a soft emotional discourse of seduction and romance.[371] Millions of Little Pinks online have become fans and followers of the Communist

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[367] Xiaojun Song, Xiaodong Wang, Qiang Song, 宋晓军,王小东,宋强, *Zhongguo Bu Gaoxing* 中国不高兴 [China is Not Happy] (Xianggang: Zhonghua shuju, 2009).

[368] Kathrin Hille, "China's Angry Youths' Are Novel Heroes," *Financial Times (Beijing)*, March 27, 2009 http://www.ft.com/cms/s 0/3ce4216a-1af4-11de-8aa3-0000779fd2ac.html, accessed July 26, 2018.

[369] Daniel A. Bell, "Chinese Students Constructive Nationalism," *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 54, (48) (2008): B20-B20; Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 16.

[370] In 2016, a Taiwanese pop singer Chou Tzu-yu, waved the Taiwanese flag on a Korean TV show. Mainland netizens flocked to Chou's Instagram account, collectively accusing her of supporting Taiwan independence. It also prompted young people to flock to the Facebook page of Taiwan's then newly elected President Tsai Ing-wen. Following this incident, the name "Little Pink" was widely circulated across China.

[371] Kecheng Fang and Maria Repnikova, "Demystifying 'Little Pink': The Creation and Evolution of a Gendered Label for Nationalistic Activists in China," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 6 (2017): 2162-2185, doi:10.1177/1461444817731923. Furthermore, the research published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences states that the Little Pink are predominantly young women aged 18 to 24.

Youth League's social media account. They have also produced and consumed various patriotic-related popular culture products. For example, the success of a political allegory animation named "That Year, That Rabbit and Those Things" (*nanian, natu, naxieshi* 那年，那兔，那些事) and of the songs "Force of Red" and "This is China" composed by a post-1990s rap singer group, *Tianfu Shibian*, confirmed this new nationalist trend.[372] In the popular rap song "Force of Red", the lyrics speak to this sentiment explicitly, especially toward the US:

Mind your own business
Or you be motherfucking Judas
We have five-thousand-year-old history
You're the fresh kid
Tell your Uncle Sam about the thing
The red king's coming back
If you are still provoking

This depiction of rising nationalism among Chinese youth has been further confirmed by other studies. The China Youth and Children Research Centre (CYCRC) conducted a country-wide survey of Chinese college students and reported 91.9% of the respondents were willing to contribute to the fight against "foreign aggression."[373] In 2011, another survey regarding young people's perspectives about their relationships with the state was carried out. The researchers received completed questionnaires from 2,232 high school students from 30 schools in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Dalian, and Xi'an. The report showed that 90.2% of the surveyed high school students felt that they were proud of being Chinese, and 80.7% of them expressed that they supported the government's policies and they would be willing to subordinate their personal interests to national interests, even if this might mean going to war.[374] In October 2012, the CYCRC published a research report entitled *The Report of the*

[372] See "That Year, That Rabbit and Those Things," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNgyxzmza;
"Force of Red," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-zoOhM13d4;
"This is China," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brMxzkbFb4k.
[373] Jieying Xi, Yuxiao Sun and Jing Jian Xiao, *Chinese Youth in Transition* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 79-105.
[374] CYCRC, Zhong Ri Han Mei gaozhongsheng bijiao yanjiu baogao 中日韩美高中生比较研究报告[The Report of a comparative study of high school students from China, Japan, South Korea and the U.S.] *Zhongguo qingnian yanjiu,*中国青年研究, 6, (2009), 62-68.

Development of the Chinese Youth in the New Century, 2000-2010, which showed that Chinese university students had a strong sense of belonging to the state and support for the CCP.[375]

I understand that the results from studies that are conducted by CCP-sponsored institutions sometimes are used for political or propaganda purposes, so there might be potential issues of validity and reliability. However, as long as the raw data is used carefully, much of it can still provide a general picture of the situation. Furthermore, the data above obtained by the state were also confirmed by other scholars' work, such as Gregory P. Fairbrother's research comparing the effect of political education between Hong Kong and China. He found that Patriotic Education eventually succeeded in inculcating a strong sense of nationalism in Chinese youth and strengthening their trust in their state.[376]

In conclusion, this ongoing campaign, after being active for nearly three decades, appears to be effective in constructing a normalized "Chinese identity" for youth.[377] The "patriotic generation" was born and raised in the official narrative imposed by the CCP. The emphasis placed on historical suffering has most likely contributed to the nationalist sentiment among the new generation. Peter Gries also argued that the patriotic narrative of the "century of humiliation" and the emergence of national sentiment have been mutually constructed: "Chinese visions of the 'Century' have shaped their sense of self, and these changes to Chinese identity have altered their views of the 'Century.'"[378] In other words, the Patriotic Education Campaign played a fundamental part in encouraging the popularisation of nationalism among the younger generation and provided youth with a framework for a designated "Chinese identity," a framework that encompassed the following aspects:

1. Statism: The CCP has become more or less equivalent to the state and nation. Chinese people are educated to be loyal to the regime because loving and supporting the CCP is inseparable from loving the country itself. In other words, criticizing or opposing the party is tantamount

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[375] Guoqi An and Xiquan Deng, *Xin shiji zhongguo qingnian fazhan baogao* 2000-2010, ed. China Youth and Children Research Center (Shanghai: Guangming Press, 2012).
[376] Gegorgy P. Fairbrother, "The Effects of Political Education and Critical Thinking on Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese University Students' National Attitudes," *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24, no.5 (2003): 606.
[377] Maria Hsia Chang, "Chinese Irredentist Nationalism: The Magician's Last Trick," *Comparative Strategy* 17, no. 1 (1998): 83.
[378] Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 48.

to an unpatriotic act. From this perspective, this framework of "Chinese identity" contains a facet of "state dominance" or "party dominance." The Patriotic Education Campaign has been aimed to present the CCP as the embodiment of the nation's interest that can wipe away past national trauma and lead Chinese people to victory.[379]

2. The historical burden of the "Century of Humiliation": This term describes the period of Western imperialist aggression against China from 1839 to 1949, when unequal treaties were signed, and Chinese society was in chaos. Patriotic Education has emphasized the need to remember the sting of national suffering and to prevent the loss of Chinese identity due to national weakness and foreign aggression. The young generation never experienced this national trauma themselves, but they have been taught to carry on the burden of national vulnerability. Therefore, the memory of "national humiliation" has played a powerful role in the official rhetoric about constructing Chinese identity. It produces anxiety about how China can become powerful again, and this historical burden of humiliation and anxiety have been formulated as the "emotional" element for the "Chinese identity."[380]

3. A strong belief in China's rejuvenation: Especially after Xi took office in 2012 and his articulated his slogan of the "China Dream," Patriotic Education put more emphasis on building the young generation's confidence in the rising power of China on the competitive global stage. The young generation that was born after 1990 grew up in an era of a strong market economy, increasing openness, rapid development of the internet, and optimization of material conditions in China, and all this has given this generation a stronger sense of recognition and belonging to the CCP and the country today.

4. "Han" ethnocentrism: Chinese nationalism has become overwhelmingly ethnocentric since the Patriotic Education Campaign was conducted. Han-centrism has been increasingly influential in Chinese national identity debates. Han culture is seen as the essence of the nation, and its interests as representing the entire nation, although this contradicts the official narrative's claim to multi-ethnic unity.[381] The understanding of "Han Chinese" as equivalent

[379] Suisheng Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations," Political Science Quarterly 115, no. 1 (2000): 21-23, doi:10.2307/2658031.
[380] Ibid.
[381] John M. Friend and Bradley A. Thayer, "The Rise of Han-Centrism and What it Means for International Politics," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 17, no. 1 (2017): 91-114, doi:10.1111/sena.12223.

to "distinct" or even "superior Chinese" has become the racial and ethnic element of Chinese identity.

4.10 Summary

There have been various scholarly opinions on nations and nationalism. Chinese nationalism was reconstructed in modern times but is based on certain types of culture and tradition according to the ethno-symbolism perspective. After the decline of the communist movement in the 1990s, in order to legitimate its rule, the CCP had to take up nationalism as its last-ditch cause. Axel Schneider termed it "the left over."[382] Paul Cohen named this a "rediscovery" and said it was a "logical choice" for the CCP to launch the Patriotic Education Campaign in the 1990s, hoping to win support from its younger generation.[383] The campaign has involved various programs through the media, schools, and other aspects of the public environment and has been intended to instil the official Chinese narrative in young students, including students overseas. In order to win more young loyal propaganda consumers after Xi took office in 2012, the CCP also updated its strategies and managed to adapt to youth's popular culture. As a result, the campaign has had a silent transforming influence on Chinese youth and has generated a new trend of nationalist sentiment and trust in the CCP.

As Peter Hays Gries argued, the official national narrative has played a fundamental part in characterising the present Chinese identity among the young generation.[384] In other words, Patriotic Education did not only provide a framework for a country-wide movement but also forcefully inculcated the young generation with an invented perception of an absolute image of "Chineseness" that is directly and indirectly relevant to the construction of their Chinese identity.[385] I would like to use Allen Chun's summary of the relationship between identity and nation-state to close this chapter:

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[382] Personal conversation with Axel Schneider, April 20, 2018.
[383] Paul A. Cohen, "Remembering and Forgetting National Humiliation in Twentieth-Century China," *Twentieth-Century China* 27, no. 2 (2002): 1-39.
[384] Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 69-85.
[385] Allen Chun, "Fuck Chineseness: on the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity," *Boundary* 23, no. 2 (1996): 111, doi:10.2307/303809.128.

In the service of the modern nation-state, identity is rarely a question of who one is as an individual, despite appearances to the contrary, but always, in the first instance, of who we are as a group. Identity is also less about the fact of who one is than about the perception of those facts. Because we are dealing with perceptions, we should emphasize, as well, that they are selective and strategic by nature. Discourses of identity produced by the state or cultural mainstream always make claims about the nature of identity as though they are based on natural facts, when, in actuality, they are just claims, or representations, that need to be constantly legitimized.[386]

[386] Chun, "Fuck Chineseness: on the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity," 126.

Chapter 5 Students' motivations and expectations for studying in Germany

As I presented in Chapter Three, I conducted biographical interviews with 25 Chinese students as well as combined participant observations in Germany. The presentation and analysis of the data will follow a chronological sequence of the participating students' experience. I will begin by presenting students' motivations for and expectations about studying in Germany, as required by research objective 1.

Research objective 1: What were the motivations for Chinese students to pursue further studies in German universities? What were their expectations about Germany before leaving China?

Participants' motivations and perceptions about studying abroad played a vital role in their overall experience abroad, because they functioned as something that Martin Heideger described as the "fore-structure of understanding."[387] According to Zhang, this "fore-structure of understanding" is "determined by the historical givens of the culture in which we are born, that we can name, speak, and think only within the boundaries of our language […] [but it is] only a necessary but provisional beginning, not a fixation of presuppositions never to be changed and modified."[388] Students' initial perceptions of and motivations for study in Germany served as the "fore-structure" of their understanding as well as a provisional position for potential changes after various experiences in Germany. Gadamer has reminded us that "wanting to avoid one's own concepts in the explanation is not just impossible, but obvious foolishness."[389] Therefore, rather than foolishly trying to avoid them, it seems necessary to scrutinize Chinese students' motivations for coming to Germany and their preconceptions about Germany first, in order to be able to trace their process of change later.

In the majority of situations, international students as well as their family members have multiple interests and concerns about studying abroad, rather than a monolithic one. Following Mazzarol and Soutar, the push-pull framework divides these interests and concerns into two groups. The "push" factors focus on the home country as the main reason that leads students to

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[387] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquaarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 191.
[388] Longxi Zhang, "The Myth of the Other: China in the Eyes of the West", *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (1988): 108-131, doi:10.1086/448476,128.
[389] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 375.

decide whether or not to study abroad (in other words, why students leave); the "pull" factors focus on the destinations or the host countries, especially including what attracts international students (in other words, where students will go).[390]

Some researchers have studied the factors that influenced Chinese students to study abroad based on the push-and-pull framework.[391] In the Chinese context, the push factors include, in particular, the intense competition for educational opportunities in China. Education has been seen to play an essential role in Chinese social and economic mobility, and the educational success of individuals can contribute to the social rise of an entire family. Many Chinese families therefore are willing to invest intensively in children's education. This investment has been facilitated by the one-child policy, which has meant that most families only have one child to focus on.[392]

Since the job market requires more master's degrees, the competition for admission into master's study programs has also become fierce;[393] a master's degree provides students with a second chance if they did not manage to attend a good university for their undergraduate studies. Many Chinese students are largely influenced by university rankings when deciding what is a good university.[394] Due to the fierce competition, it is difficult to be accepted in top or prestigious universities in China. Therefore, some Chinese students plan to study abroad to upgrade their academic qualifications. They wish to enhance their competitiveness in the employment market and thus gain potential socio-economic benefits.

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[390] Tim Mazzarol and Geoffrey N. Soutar, "'Push-Pull' Factors Influencing International Student Destination Choice," *International Journal of Educational Management* 16, no. 2 (2002): 82-90.

[391] Peter Bodycott, "Choosing A Higher Education Study Abroad Destination," *Journal of Research in International Education* 8, no. 3 (2009): 349-373, doi:10.1177/1475240909345818;Xuemei Liu, Frank Elston and Peng Zhou, "Comparing Research on Chinese Students Study Abroad Decision-making: China-based Versus Overseas-based Perspectives," in *Proceedings of the 23rd International Business Research Conference* (2013) :1-13, World Business Institute; Gregg Smith et al., *Perceptions, Information and Choice: Understanding How Chinese Students Select A Country for Overseas Study* (Canberra: Australian Education International, 2001); Jürgen Henze and Jiani Zhu, "Current Research On Chinese Students Studying Abroad," *Research in Comparative and International Education* 7, no. 1 (2012): 90-104, doi:10.2304/rcie.2012.7.1.90.

[392] Ann Veeck, Laura Flurry and Naihua Jiang, "Equal dreams: The One Child Policy and the Consumption of Education in Urban China," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 6, no. 1 (2003): 81-94, doi:10.1080/10253860302697.

[393] Ministry of Education, the People's Republic of China, "2017 Sees Increase in Number of Chinese Students Studying Abroad and Returning after Overseas Studies - Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China," en.moe.gov.cn, 2017, http://en.moe.gov.cn/News/Top_News/201804/t20180404_332355.html.

[394] Qi Wu, "Motivations and Decision-Making Processes of Mainland Chinese Students for Undertaking Master's Programs Abroad," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 18, no. 5 (2014): 426-445.

5.1 Participants' expectations about the "West"

In my interviews, many students spoke about China and the West as essentially two separate realities.[395] The concept of the "West" or "*Xifang*" (西方) was mentioned frequently to refer to developed countries including the European Union countries, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, while "Westerners" mainly referred to Caucasians. However, most of the students applied the terms rather generally without making any distinctions between the various countries and cultures covered by this overarching term.

As I tried to explain in Chapter Four, the official narrative of patriotic education has influenced Chinese nationalism and anti-Western trends among the younger generation in China. Therefore, these young Chinese students' perceptions of the "West" were also ambivalent. The majority of the students had two distinct yet complementary images of the Western world: the "evil" Western hegemony in foreign policy toward China but also the "advanced and developed" Western society.[396] This ambivalence is particularly interesting because the younger generation seemed to combine their nationalistic sentiments with idolatry of "Western" cultures, specifically if those cultures fit into their "modern" and "materialistic" lifestyles.[397] That is to say, many young people demonstrated two different attitudes on different occasions: continuing to enjoy electronics and animation from Japan while passionately engaging in violent anti-Japanese protests; expressing strong patriotism by boycotting the French supermarket Carrefour during the 2008 Olympic torch relay while making sure to spend all Carrefour discount vouchers before the boycott; strongly denouncing the racist commercial advertisement of the Italian fashion brand Dolce & Gabbana online in 2018 and starting to purchase luxury goods from the brand again shortly after the advertisement was no longer a trending topic.[398]

Most of my interview partners and their families had never been abroad or to the West before they arrived in Germany. They did not have a concrete image regarding life "abroad." Instead,

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[395] Stig Thøgersen, "I Will Change Things in My Own Small Way": Chinese Overseas Students, "Western" Values, and Institutional Reform," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44, no. 3 (2015): 103-124, doi:10.1177/186810261504400305.
[396] Lisong Liu, *Chinese Student Migration and Selective Citizenship* (London: Routledge, 2015).
[397] Fengshu Liu, *Urban Youth in China*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011).
[398] Stanley Rosen, "Contemporary Chinese Youth and the State," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 2 (2009): 359-69.

they only had hazy fantasies about what West might look like. However, one thing is certain: to them, "abroad" did not refer to its literal meaning but the "developed world."[399] For them, while the concept of studying abroad did not necessarily refer to specific destinations, it did normally refer to more urbanised and modernised areas in the countries of the West. Nevertheless, their conception of "the West" was rather fuzzy and ambiguous, and they seemed to make no clear differentiation between different countries. Many participants held a favourable view that people in the West, especially Europe, enjoys a higher quality of life than those in other places. F2 described her expectation of "abroad" as "*fashionable and modernised.*" Like many other participants, the first cities that came to her mind were metropolises such as Paris, Berlin, Milan etc. F8 explained to me that the picture he had of the West was one of high technology: "*I thought everything in Germany was automatic with high technology*."

However, this kind of imagination of the West as more technically advanced and urbanised usually led to disappointment among the students upon their arrival, especially for students who came from big cities in China. F1 could not hide her disappointment when talking about how she felt when she found out that the city where she studied had only one big shopping mall, which we will discuss in the later chapters.

Many students in the study also expected that people in the West enjoy more freedom (politically, socially, and economically), especially compared to those Chinese people whose lives are under great economic pressure and rapid lifestyle changes. M5 believed that students in a Western university could do whatever they wanted to and would not be "controlled" by their teachers and parents as they were in China. "*They are more independent and autonomous than we Chinese youth*." F2 mentioned that she was even a little bit worried that, if the West was "too" free, she would not be able to adapt quickly.

As we can see, the expectations held by the participants before arrival in Germany were generally positive. Many tended to believe that the West is generally more advanced than China. Participants, especially female students, revealed that they enjoy watching TV series and movies from the West, mainly American ones, such as *Friends*, *American Pie*, *Gossip Girl*,

[399] See Vanessa Fong, *Paradise Redefined* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2011).

and *Big Bang Theory*, which were one of the main sources of information that formed their perceptions about the West.

5.2 How participants imagined Germany

The *Huawei* company has been working with the German Institute of Global and Area Studies and University Duisburg-Essen to conduct a survey based on 1,000 Chinese citizens plus 100 Chinese political decision-makers as well as 200 Chinese economic decision-makers in China about their perceptions of Germany every two years since 2012.[400] These bi-annual "Huawei studies" have offered a detailed picture regarding Chinese people's perceptions about Germany. Many of those interviewed saw Germany as one of the leaders of the world economy and a producer of high-quality cars. "Made in Germany" is synonymous with high product quality in China. In line with the study above, the Chinese students interviewed in this study seemed to also have conjured up a very positive and euphoric idea of Germany before their arrival, sometimes even mythologizing and glorifying the country. German manufacturing quality was hailed by many participants as long-lasting and reliable. Innovation and high technology were also key words in relation to Germany. The categorization of Germany by the participants appeared also to be highly homogeneous. For example, spontaneous associations with Germany such as economic power, vehicles, the machinery industry, beer, and technology played a prominent role in shaping the participants' national image of Germany while in China.[401]

Some interviewed students also glorified the level of reflection on World War II history in Germany compared to the situation in Japan. This is in part attributable to the fact that Germany, unlike Japan, is highly regarded for its proactive acceptance of the past among people in China. In addition, the intensive economic and cultural exchanges between Germany and China

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[400] *Huawei*, one of the largest telecommunications equipment manufacturers in the world based in Shenzhen, China.
Huawei, *Deutschland und China – Wahrnehmung und Realität* [Germany and China – Perception and reality] (Berlin: Huawei Technologies Deutschland GmbH, 2012).
Huawei, *Deutschland und China – Wahrnehmung und Realität* [Germany and China –Perception and reality] (Berlin: Huawei Technologies Deutschland GmbH, 2014).
Huawei, *Deutschland und China – Wahrnehmung und Realität* [Germany and China –Perception and reality] (Berlin: Huawei Technologies Deutschland GmbH, 2016).

[401] Carolynn Look, "Chinese Worship of Germany Ill-informed," *Global Times*, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/908857.shtml, accessed on February 02, 2019.

greatly contributed to Germany's exceptionally good reputation among these Chinese students.[402]

Furthermore, Germany was also romanticized by some participants in this study as "a country of poets and thinkers" as well as of musicians. For example, Goethe and Schiller, together with Beethoven and Bach, were all well-known among participants, not to mention philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and of course Marx.[403]

In summary, Germany's image among the Chinese participants was shaped primarily by positive evaluations. However, there was also a clear difference regarding the attitude students held towards East and West Germany. Participants were more willing to go to West Germany, because East Germany was considered less developed and modernised and less "German" due to its previous political system.

5.3 Positive expectations about German higher education

Participating students and their families perceived the German education system quite positively. In line with the research undertaken by Huawei and the German Institute of Global and Area Studies in 2014, a majority of the Chinese participants interviewed (76%) believed in the excellence of German education. One reason may be that frustration with the domestic education system in China has contributed to a more positive view of other systems. The other reason could be the general appreciation of Germany in China, as mentioned above, where disciplines such as engineering and philosophy enjoy a particularly good reputation.[404]

As F9 explained: "*German higher education is world class! 'Made in Germany' is a symbol of high quality all over the world–whether it concerns automobiles or education. Especially in fields such as engineering and natural sciences, you can benefit from Germany's long and*

[402] Birte Klemm, „China: Das Deutschlandbild In China - Deutsch / Chinesische Beziehungen," Chinaweb.De, 2007, http://www.chinaweb.de/china_politik/beziehungen_deutschland_china/chinesisch_deutsche_beziehungen/china_deutschlandbild_chinas.htm.
[403] Ibid.
[404] Germany and China – Perception and Reality the Huawei Study 2014, http://www.huawei-studie.de/downloads/Huawei-Studie-2014-EN.pdf, 169, accessed September 10, 2018.

prestigious tradition of higher education [...] *German university degrees are highly sought after by employers around the world.*" (10th November 2014, first interview)

5.4 Information obtained about Germany

The majority of my interviewed students did not have much prior experience with international travel. These students were normally the first member of their family who had travelled or studied abroad. I call these young students "the first-generation of international mobility" in their families. The majority of my interview partners belonged to this group. However, since they did not have sufficient prior first-hand experience of living or even traveling abroad, the most important consideration fuelling their intentions to go abroad was not the relatively objective information about the social and economic conditions abroad, but rather their imaginings of such conditions. Their perceptions of the outside world were generally based on secondary information from the media and the internet. In other words, the factors that influenced these participating Chinese students to go abroad were not only their real preferences and aspirations, but also their information and imagination about life in the outside world, especially in Western countries.[405] Therefore, it was important to discover the source of these perceptions and this information because it would facilitate my understanding of how Chinese students and their families choose study in Germany.

Firstly, the results of the interviews showed that, prior to coming to Germany, few interview partners had prepared for their future studies through specific training about German culture and society. Some admitted that they had only a very basic knowledge of the country including knowledge acquired in geography or history classes at secondary school or through the media, especially the internet. However, the interviewees stated that the media provided them with only a rough understanding of Germany as a country.

The majority of the students I interviewed mentioned that they had searched for information regarding study in Germany only on Chinese websites. Some students who were already studying in Germany shared information on internet forums. This became the main source for the potential students who planned to study in Germany. Of course, students who studied

[405] Haideng Huang, "Who Wants to Leave China?" *Journal of East Asian Studies* 17 (2017), 192.

German literature and language were exceptions: most of them had had contact with German professors at university, spoke German relatively well, and understood German culture and society relatively more fully and deeply, and were therefore much better prepared to study in Germany than students from other majors, although they would encounter many of the same problems studying abroad.

Furthermore, study-abroad agencies serve as intermediaries in preparing and facilitating students' study abroad. They are powerful players in shaping the course of student migration[406] and contribute to the construction of students' dream of going abroad.[407] Previous research has shown that Chinese study abroad agencies have a significant influence on student's decision-making and preparation processes.[408] Many of my research participants had turned to agencies for help to accomplish their goals of studying in Germany. The interviews revealed that study abroad agencies were an important and common source of information about university applications and life in Germany. As M15 stated, "*I trust professional education agents more because they are resourceful and much more professional and effective than I would be if I were applying to study on my own.*" Some of the agencies also offer local guidance or pick-up service at the airport for new students who have just arrived in Germany.

To conclude, the participants' impressions regarding Germany prior to their arrival were mostly positive. Together with instrumental advantages, these impressions contributed to the participants' decisions to study in Germany. Their choice to study in Germany was also influenced by their rosy fantasies about life in Europe as a fairy tale in comparison with life in China, where people are under great economic pressure and caught in rapid lifestyle changes. It is necessary to emphasize that the eventual decisions Chinese students made to pursue their studies in Germany were not driven by a simple cause, but rather by a mixture, sometimes even a random mixture, of different motives and imaginings of their study destination. Zhu's research also found the similar results that Chinese students were attracted by many reasons to study abroad including job prospects and cultural experience.[409] However, it is also important to keep in mind that participants' overly romanticised views might either be affirmed or lead

[406] Yuanfang Shen, *Dragon Seed in the Antipodes* (Victoria, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 89.
[407] Lisong Liu, *Chinese Student Migration and Selective Citizenship* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016).
[408] Qi Wu, "Motivations and Decision-Making Processes of Mainland Chinese Students for Undertaking Master's Programs Abroad," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 18, no. 5 (2014): 435-436.
[409] Jiani Zhu, "Academic Adjustment of Chinese Students at German Universities" (PhD diss., Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2012).

to disappointment or after arrival. We also have to keep reminding ourselves that "perception is the process of acquiring, organizing and interpreting any sensory information. It is shaped by our prior experiences, cultural values, beliefs and socialization, and can influence our reception of knowledge, the way we think and behave, and the impression we form of others."[410] Therefore, even though some argue that the word "exoticism" is never associated with Europe, unless it is in a de-colonized context, I argue that my interview partners did have an exotic image of Europe and the West before they went to Germany. I also disagree with people who identify otherness only as a process of reducing to negative characteristics. Instead, the attitude of othering can alternate between admiration and denigration.

[410] Fay Patel, Mingsheng Li and Prahalad Sooknanan, *Intercultural Communication: Building A Global Community* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Inc, 2011), 35.

Chapter 6 The social experiences and social strategies of Chinese students in Germany

The previous chapter described Chinese students held certain perceptions and expectations about studying in Germany. In order to explore if their experiences in Germany lived up to their imaginings, it is important to examine the experiences that these students lived, especially their friendships and wider social networks when they were in Germany, since the direct contacts were crucial for them to form their impressions and attitude toward the host culture as well as toward themselves through interaction and self-reflection.

How did students cultivate their new friendship networks? What choices did they make so as to stretch their relationships beyond mere functional sociability? Different social settings contributed to the students' social encounters in different ways in terms of access to social contacts or the range of contacts available. The amount and quality of personal contacts eventually forged was assumed to have a profound influence on any evaluation of the students' experiences in Germany. The quality and quantity of interpersonal relationships that the participants managed to generate determined both the learning that ensued and the degree of their satisfaction with their stay. It was assumed, based on previous research, that significant relationships in the host country play a vital role at all stages of the adaptation process.[411]

The following section will present the social networks of this study's participants in order to fulfil research objective 2.

Research objective 2: What did the students in this study experience in terms of social contacts and social networks in Germany?

Kashima and Loh observed that Asian international students' adjustment to Australia was greatly shaped by the personal connections they made with other international students and students from their home countries, and the relationships they had with Australians.[412] This echoes Funham and Bochner's discovery that international students' social circles are mainly

[411] Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeune, *Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2010), 184.
[412] Emiko S. Kashima and Evelyn Loh, "International Students' Acculturation: Effects of International, Conational, and Local Ties and Need For Closure," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 30, no. 4 (2006): 471-485, doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2006.12.003.

divided into these three circles.[413] Based on this framework, I decided to divide my interview partners' experiences into three main sections: (1) social experience with other Chinese people in Germany; (2) social experience with Germans; (3) social experience with other internationals in Germany.

6. 1 Social experiences with other Chinese people in Germany

6.1.1 Instrumental support

Most of the students in this study had initiated contact with the local Chinese students' community in Germany before arrival. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) is the official organisation of overseas Chinese students and scholars and is registered in most universities outside of China. CSSA is mostly responsible for helping Chinese students in their life abroad and claims to serve as a bridge between the Chinese and other communities, spreading Chinese culture. These institutions are organized by the Chinese students in universities abroad themselves but financed and supported by the Chinese embassies and consulates abroad. They normally have an official social media account on WeChat or a Facebook page so they can easily be reached by Chinese students who have just arrived in a foreign country or even before their arrival. Students could use these platforms to exchange information and make their first contact in the host country, such as looking for accommodations. All my interview partners except for one had participated in activities organised by CSSA.

Therefore, one popular way among Chinese students to make their first contact with other Chinese students was via the Chinese students' association, which allowed them to further develop their own social circles. Different from what has been described in previous research, which found that international students seek out local contacts for instrumental reasons and communicate with co-nationals for emotional bonds,[414] the Chinese students in my research

[413] Adrian Furnham and Stephen Bochner, "Social Difficulty in a Foreign Culture: An Empirical Analysis of Culture Shock," *Cultures in Contact* (1982):161-198, doi:10.1016/b978-0-08-025805-8.50016-0.
[414] Adrian Furnham and Stephen Bochner, "Social Difficulty in a Foreign Culture: An Empirical Analysis of Culture Shock," *Cultures in Contact* (1982), 161-198, doi:10.1016/b978-0-08-025805-8.50016-0.

looked for instrumental support within the Chinese community, especially within the virtual Chinese community. From my observations of the Chinese student community, friendship between students served as an important source of information. Compared to contacting German counterparts, contacting Chinese peers seemed to be more efficient in terms of acquiring necessary information. Through the online community, especially WeChat group chat, one could easily obtain almost any information one needed to survive in Germany. This kind of platform also catered to the particular needs of Chinese students, for example, information on where to buy certain Chinese food ingredients and where to find the lowest price for shipping things between China and Germany.

From the contacts my interview partners collected within the Chinese online community, they could initiate their own circles based on majors, sports interests, etc., or seek out those who came from the same university in China.

For example, F7 mentioned, "*If you need something from China, there's always other students flying to Germany, so you can ask them to take it with them and they could bring it to you*." (March 2015, first interview)

M12 also shared similar experiences: "*I joined the WeChat group and asked if anyone was from my university in China. In just a minute, someone replied. She also had graduated from my university, and so she offered to pick me up.*" (November 2014, first interview)

Moreover, new arrivals can get more help with the initial activities they will have to go through, including looking for accommodation, registration at the university, visa extension, opening a bank account, and so on, from senior Chinese students who have already gone through these experiences. According to Adelman, the advantage of friends from the home country is their informational strength: their similar experiences allow them to share information about knowledge-based resources and strategies for coping with new cultures and environments. Friends from one's homeland can also provide skills and practices that are relevant to their country of origin. Students who arrived earlier may have had certain experiences that other

students who arrive later have not yet had, which allows the early arrivals to prepare their compatriot friends for such events.[415]

In conclusion, on the instrumental level, the Chinese students primarily obtained information about Germany and their universities from the Chinese community, namely online social media platforms, as instrumental support practice. Most of them already had had Chinese students contact them before they came to Germany and normally their questions about daily life within and beyond the university had been answered before they arrived. Therefore, they did not necessarily need to contact local people from Germany for help.

6.1.2 Emotional support

In addition to instrumental support, the Chinese students also looked for emotional support from their co-nationals. M14 referred to the Chinese community in Germany as "*zijiren*"(自己人) or "one's own people." Many of the students interviewed explained that, at the beginning of their time in Germany, they felt lonely, especially when it was winter, when the days were darker and shorter.

Many students would go and talk to a Chinese person right away when they needed help. This gave them emotional reassurance. When they felt upset, they could also write on the WeChat group and someone who was interested would reply and offer comfort and help.

M10 shared:
"*We are all Chinese, and Chinese people of course will help Chinese. It's natural that we help each other in a foreign country here.*" (March 2015, informal interview)

"*It feels like I finally found my home and I can let my mom feel relieved and not worry about me too much*." (January 2015, second interview)

[415] Mara B. Adelman, "Cross-Cultural Adjustment," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 12, no. 3 (1988): 183-204, doi:10.1016/0147-1767(88)90015-6.

He also emphasised the concept of solidarity, that "*Chinese people abroad should be together and support each other; otherwise, it's easy to get bullied*." As Len Ang has explained, among Chinese people, there are intuitive and spontaneous connections, "a sentimental feeling of 'after all, we are all Chinese.'"[416]

After the first semester, my participants had already divided themselves into different subgroups. Within the students' community, there were also circles that had divided into subgroups based on various identifiers, e.g. the university from which they had graduated in China or *xiaoyou hu*i (校友会), birthplace or *tongxianghui* (同乡会), and study subjects or classmates. In addition to the Chinese student community, there were also Chinese religious communities, especially the Christian community. Chinese community, as an umbrella term, therefore, also contained various layers and had internal differences. As Ang pointed out, "Chinese ethnicity, as a common reference point for this imagined community, cannot presume the erasure of internal differences and particularities, as well as disjuncture, as the basis of […] collective identity."[417]

Furnham and Bochner found that co-national friendship is the most significant category of friendship because international students can provide themselves with emotional support by continuing to practice their culture and tradition with friends from the same culture in an unfamiliar environment.[418] Small cliques tended to keep the same lifestyle as they did in China, as a way to "refuse" a "German" social life.

The students kept a "Chinese" way of hanging out, e.g., they cooked Chinese food or played Chinese card games together, which was a way to make a home for themselves in Germany. Some students managed to meet other Chinese communities beyond student-only groups, for example with Chinese people who were already permanent residents with family in Germany. F9 revealed feeling like she had "*a real home away from home*" because the Chinese family she met in Germany was always ready to offer her emotional support.

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[416] Ang Ien, "The Differential Politics of Chineseness," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 22, no. 1 (1994): 74.
[417] Ang Ien, "The Differential Politics of Chineseness," 76.
[418] Adrian Furnham and Stephen Bochner, "Social Difficulty in a Foreign Culture: An Empirical Analysis of Culture Shock," *Cultures in Contact* (1982), 161-198, doi:10.1016/b978-0-08-025805-8.50016-0.

Furthermore, the students interviewed also often mentioned that they felt relaxed speaking Chinese to discuss emotional or personal matters. For some students speaking their local language dialect was even "luxurious." When sharing emotions, most students explicitly preferred to share them with their friends in China or Chinese friends met in Germany, not only because their Chinese friends might have a more common understanding of the context of the emotion, but also because it was easier to convey the emotion in their native language.

F6 accepted my interview at the very beginning mainly because I spoke the same dialect as she did, Sichuanese. She commented after our first interview:

"*I haven't talked in Chinese like this for a long time, except for calling my mom. It feels so good to speak Sichuanese with you here in Germany* […] *I feel I am back to real life again.*" (December 2014, first interview)

Students also practiced Chinese culture together. M3 initiated a *Xiangsheng* or Chinese Crosstalk club and performed several times in different German cities with another fellow student from Beijing. Since the language they use was Chinese, their audience was mainly Chinese people in Germany.

M5 started to learn Chinese medicine and calligraphy as well as joining a Go club and learning the Chinese instrument *guqin* when he came to Germany. There was a period of time when, wherever he went, he would take a Chinese foldable hand fan with him. He noted: "*It gave me this feeling of being a Chinese gentleman*" (December 2017, third interview).

Being in Germany, some students started to learn Chinese culture and delighted in performing it in Germany because these moments offered them an opportunity to feel close to their home culture. These cultural activities offered them a sense of belonging in Germany and confirmed and enhanced their feeling of being "Chinese." As M2 explained, "[…] *I feel like it is almost a shame that I didn't practice Chinese calligraphy before coming to Germany. Now I feel more authentic as a Chinese person after learning it online and practicing it sometimes, so I could show and teach Germans who are interested in Chinese calligraphy.*" (June 2015, informal interview)

Furthermore, most participants admitted that they missed the festive atmosphere at home when it came to Chinese festivals. I will take the most important festival, the Spring Festival, as an example. The China Central Television's Spring Festival Gala has been a cultural symbol in China since the 1980s. For many Chinese, watching the festival gala on Chinese New Year's Eve is almost ritualised. Solidarity is one of the basic themes of the Spring Festival Gala. In order to keep the tradition, the Chinese students hosted a Spring Festival Gala following the example of the China Central Television's program that had been ritualized at their own university in Germany. As the closing song goes: "无论天涯与海角，神州万里同怀抱，共祝愿，祖国好。" The general meaning in English is "No matter how far we are, we are carried in the arms of China. We all wish our motherland well." This became a space for these Chinese students in Germany to feel bound with the motherland as well as with their family back home, which provided them with emotional support.

6.1.3 Financial support

Most of my interviewees were family supported, at least during the first one or two years of their study. One of the most common and widely acceptable reasons to borrow money was to extend one's residence permit. In order to extend their student visa, students needed to have enough money in their bank account. For this reason, students often needed to ask for money to extend a visa.[419] Because, at this time, they had not yet graduated, but many of them did not want to ask for help from family anymore, especially for students who come from Chinese lower-middle class family. Quite a few students I interviewed had borrowed to extend their visa and lend money to help their friends. They would not ask Germans or other internationals to do this. There was also solidarity between students who lent/borrowed money to/ from each other within small circles. Without enough money, one cannot extend one's residence permit in Germany; several interviewed students also pointed out that this was one of the things that most worried them and that made them explicitly feel like "foreigners" in Germany.

6.1.4 Out of the comfort zone

[419] Proof of deposit of at least €8,640 in the bank is required to extend the student visa for one year.

There were also students in the study who tried to distance themselves from the Chinese community on purpose. For example, F3 tried to avoid all possible Chinese contacts because she wanted to look for more German contacts in order to adapt to the new environment in a "local way."

She explained her opinion:

"*We have heard about this again and again, that Chinese students always hang out within the Chinese circle. I wanted to be integrated in the local community as much as possible and meet more friends as much as possible. I don't want to be a loser.*" (April 2015, first interview)

It was intriguing that she approached me since she had heard about my research project and wanted to share her opinion on this topic, even though I was Chinese too. She regarded hanging out with other Chinese people as a sign of being a loser, and she believed that a successful "blending in" while studying abroad should not only be based on the diploma at the end of the study, but also on how many local friends one had successfully established contact within Germany.

While some students wanted to step out of their comfort zones, there were students who suffered from being "gossiped" about by the Chinese community because they had distanced themselves from that community while getting closer to the locals or other internationals.

F2 explained, "*I wanted to meet more other foreigners, not necessarily only Germans but also other internationals, but I was criticized as a typical example of foreign worship* […] *I feel like I'm overwhelmed by the opinion from the Chinese community and cyberbullied*." (July 2020, informal interview)

F9 also shared her story that she met a German male tandem partner and later they started dating. She was criticized as a "Chinese prostitute" by her Chinese classmates: "*My Chinese classmates called me a bitch when I started to date the German boy and spent more time with him and his friends.*"

It seems F2 and F9, who wanted to have more non-Chinese contacts, therefore got criticized and even distained by their Chinese community. Interestingly enough, these two cases were both female Chinese students.

In conclusion, the combination of instrumental, emotional, and financial support within the Chinese student community served as an important support system that assisted these young individuals to start and continue with their studies and lives in Germany. However, we can also see that there was an inward tendency among these insular support networks.[420] For some Chinese students in this study, staying within the Chinese community was not their deliberate choice, especially for students who had expected to establish contacts with Germans and other international students. However, except for a few students who had taken initiative to approach local people, the majority had difficulties and experienced barriers to fulfilling these expectations. They therefore stayed within their "Chinese comfort zone," although it was against their original wish before coming to Germany.

It should be noted that the Chinese community here only refers to Chinese people from mainland China rather than "Chinese" who come from other countries and areas (for example, from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, or Malaysia) second-generation immigrants from Mainland China, or those born in a mix-racial family with one parent of non-Chinese descent. Many of my participants regarded these other types of people as less "authentically" Chinese, since they were regarded as being too "Westernized".[421] This will be discussed in the next chapter about the participants' understanding of "Chineseness."

6.2 Social experiences with Germans

6.2.1 Looking for German students as language tandem partners

Language was one of the greatest challenges that most of my participants faced, and the tandem method became one of the ways to address this challenge most frequently mentioned by my

[420] Andrea G. Trice, "Mixing it Up: International Graduate Students' Social Interactions with American Students," *Journal of College Student Development*, 45, no.6 (2004), 671-687.
[421] See Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 28-29.

interview partners when they discussed how they started to develop their social networks with Germans in the university setting. Using the tandem method, a free and mutual exchange of linguistic and cultural knowledge, was often regarded as a less intimidating way of speaking the target language with a proficient speaker than other types of exchanges in normal daily contexts.[422] For example, one participant noted: "*I have a classmate who mentioned in the class that she had been to China, so she must have some interest in China and Chinese. I asked her if she wanted to become my language tandem partner and I could also help her with some Chinese, and she could help me with my class notes.*" (October 2015, second interview)

The German language skills of the interviewed Chinese students were normally better than their counterpart's Chinese language skills, so they retained more power in terms of knowledge. The tandem partner relationships became "teacher-student" relationships, and therefore were asymmetrical.[423] Sometimes, the roles completely shifted, which led to situations in which the Chinese student was always tutoring his/her German partner. One participant noted, "*He can only speak a few words in Chinese, and we cannot have a decent conversation in Chinese. All I have to do is to help him with his Chinese homework. I am teaching him a lot, but I don't really learn much from my tandem partner.*" (November 2015, second interview)

Students also experienced other tensions in these relationships. For example, if a person expected his/her partner to be highly committed to linguistic feedback, then he/she in return needed to demonstrate a similarly high level of commitment. Otherwise, the partners would experience an imbalance in effort or commitment to the goal, which could lead to tension between them. However, while tandem partners might be somewhat beneficial, these relationships normally operated on a one-on-one basis. Therefore, for some of my participants, the tandem method was a way to look for personal contact with local students, especially at the beginning of their stay in Germany. However, most of these relationships stayed at a superficial level. Some of the students even told me later: "*Don't go to the Sinology Department to look for German students to make friends. They just want to use you as an instrument; it won't go any further.*" (June 2018, third interview)

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[422] Helmut Brammerts, *Selbstgesteuertes Sprachenlernen Im Tandem* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg-Verl., 2010).
[423] Per Linell and Thomas Luckmann, "Asymmetries in Dialogue: Some Conceptual Preliminaries," in *Asymmetries in dialogue*, ed. Ivana Marková and Klaus Foppa (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf:1991), 1-20.

6.2.2 Difficulties of developing friendship with German peers

Many Chinese students articulated that it was very difficult to build and maintain friendships with their Germans peers. For example, M8 said:

"*I cannot really go crazy like them, and party hard until morning like Germans. I don't like it and they just talk and dance. I cannot be like them and be friends with them*. […] *When we talk about songs we used to listen to and cartoons we used to watch, there's nothing in common. It's not the same circle, and if you have to join in, it won't help."* (December 2015, second interview)

F10 explained:

"*This is because of the process of thought closure. China is not in line with the world. The music, for example, the mainstream music is all European American music, and Asia is just totally another world. If you want to have a common topic, the films and music are not the same. Chinese might have the same topic to talk about with Japanese and Koreans*." (March 2014, informal interview)

6.2.3 Looking for contacts beyond campus

Mostly the guest students' personal experiences of Germany were limited to lecture halls, Mensa, and student dormitories. It seems that there were few opportunities for many participants to experience the everyday life of local people and families outside the university. Some organizations beyond university campus had goals to change that and to match every interested international student with a host friend or a host family. For example, some participants mentioned organisations such as *Gastfreund Verein* (Guest friend association) in their city. Apart from this, these organisations offered all host friends and guest students the opportunity to attend joint events (hiking, excursions, etc.). There were families who spoke English and were open-minded about getting to know the students in person. The Chinese students described their experiences:

M7 said:
"*First of all, it's a family. I feel safe. They are well educated and have been to Asia. They helped me with my work too. I cooked for them, and they were very happy*." (April 2016, second interview)

F10 said:
"*It's an old couple and at the very beginning, I was a little afraid because I didn't know them. They invited me to a concert and to participate in their family events. Their children don't live at home anymore. We see each other once a week and it's very often.*" (October 2018, fourth interview)

M1 said:
"*I was invited to participate in her son's graduation party, and it was so fancy and new to me. If I didn't know the local family, I wouldn't understand German culture.*" (August 2017, third interview)

These relationships developed into the students' primary bonds with Germans, especially with Germany families. The interviewed students reported that the host families were very patient, and their contacts were at least their parents' age or their grandparents' age. Some of the Chinese students received Christmas invitations and invitations to other family reunions or celebrations that were precious to the students' experiences in Germany.

6.2.4 Residential settings with Germans

Some students believed that proximity played an important role in the contact with Germans. In order to learn the local culture, some participants decided to live with Germans. However, this was not always easy. Many students had been rejected during interviews for shared apartments, but some got accepted. Some students had better experiences living with older generations. They shared with me that they found that Germans from older generations were easier to contact: "*They are more patient.*" Some students played the role of a son or daughter while sharing living space with their older landlords.

F1 said:

"*I moved to a house with a family. Their children are all out at work or in university. I, as a young man, make their house livelier.* […] *This reminds me just like my grandparents*. *I want to regard them as family*." (August 2018, fourth interview)

Even though they had separate rooms for living, sometimes Chinese students cooked dinner for the Germans they lived with or vice versa. Also, the resident landlords had more time to communicate with the Chinese students. Thus, their relationships developed into reciprocated friendships. Shared living space could serve as an arena for more frequent intercultural interaction, and thus it created opportunities for transmitting intercultural knowledge. With the older generation of German counterparts, social communication was more likely to be more reciprocal and develop more evenly. Furthermore, some students also developed good friendships with neighbours and flat mates because of common activities which have strengthened their bond.

In conclusion, although most of the students managed to build several friendships with other Chinese students while in Germany, many of them still hoped to be able to establish and maintain friendships or closer social contacts with locals. However, many participants in my research had difficulties contacting Germans, and some of them were feeling frustrated and disappointed that their expectations for friendships with locals were not being met. Nevertheless, students developed various strategies to cope with the challenging of socialisation with Germans, including initiating and maintaining social contacts with them.

6.3 Social experience with other international students

With cultural events that include international students, "being international" is the norm in such an environment. Most participants in the study had this experience during the German language courses they had to take before they were allowed to study in their program. They took intensive German courses before they were officially enrolled, or, when they were already enrolled in a study program, they took German courses along with their main subject courses. This type of German course aimed to improve their skills in the German language, but more importantly, it served as a safe space or preparation venue for students, especially new students, to get used to the local culture.

F1 said: "*I have met many students from all over the world: Iran, India, and some are from Africa. It's very cool that we all don't speak good German, but we could understand each other*. […] *They asked me to cook Chinese food for them, and I was so happy that they liked it. During the class, we also discussed a lot of different cultural habits*. […] *It's a great memory for me. We were very international. We could enjoy different food because people are from different parts*." (November 2016, third interview)

6.3.1 Student organisations on campus

At the university where my participants studied, there were also student organisations that provided international students opportunities to "integrate" into the campus. One would expect the university would provide more opportunities for international students to mingle with locals or to offer a more "international" or "global" atmosphere for both international and local students such as cultural evenings or trips together. On the one hand, the diversity of international programs opened up opportunities for students to experience other cultures. On the other hand, these international programs seemed to welcome "conventional" presentations. For example, a flyer advertising "cultural evenings" described them as consisting of "an exciting programme with music, dance performances, presentations, games, traditional food." These events therefore very easily became a presentation stage for something typical and even "stereotypical."

For example, the program plan for 2017 included Ukrainian, Peruvian, Chinese, Hungarian, Indonesian and Iranian cultural evenings. It seemed the norm to present "Otherness" to German students and other internationals. There was a tendency for these so-called cultural evenings to project non-Western culture as "primitivized, exoticized, eroticized, and commodified."[424]

[424] Sau-ling C. Wong, "Dancing in the Diaspora: Cultural Long-Distance Nationalism and the Staging of Chineseness by San Francisco's Chinese Folk Dance Association," *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 2, no. 1 (2010), 27.

Figure 1. Poster for cultural evening program (source: own photography in 2017)

Normally these cultural activities focused on "traditional" cultural stereotypes and limited their cultural presentations to food, dance etc. Therefore, these events were superficial and "Othered" to some extent. Furthermore, as we can see, the cultural evenings were always based on nation-state and focused on the "exotic" side of the culture. For example, a picture of an international day was accompanied by the caption: "Show us your culture!" This was another instance of the "Othering" of international students.

In Bhabha's terms, these cultural events represented the *creation* of cultural diversity through the *containment* of cultural difference.[425] He articulated this issue more precisely: "These other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid."[426] This was also pointed by Ang more directly: "It is racism which might be reinforced precisely by pinning down people to their ethnic identity, by marking them as ethnic."[427] This could be applied to the explanation of the cultural activities organised by the host university in Germany too.

In conclusion, the international environment made it easy to present a culture in a reductionist and simplified way; being transcultural is not only about eating a food from a particular culture or wearing traditional clothes. A successful adaptation required students' understanding about

[425] Homi K. Bhabha, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 207-221.
[426] Bhabha, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha."
[427] Ien Ang, "The Differential Politics of Chineseness," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 22, no. 1 (1994): 77.

their own culture as well as transcultural learning from members of the host nation and from other internationals.

These three social networks had powerful influences on the success of these young students' experiences in Germany. Although the Chinese students tended to have networks that included more co-nationals, they also desired to have more multinational links and relationships with host-country nationals. The latter two types of connections, whether strong or weaker ones, were important for students to adapt successfully to the local university community and beyond, yet were more difficult for my participants to initiate and maintain.[428] As Hendrickson et al. stated, "Theoretically having a variety of social contacts should give individuals access to different kinds of social resources and those with little variation could be hindered in that process."[429] The experiences with different contacts from different cultural backgrounds offered completely new and diverse opportunities for participants to reflect on themselves and their relations with others. It is interesting to note that, even though the study participants were equipped with knowledge about differences and were prepared for their new experiences in Germany, they still found themselves sometimes feeling confused or even scared. These experiences also facilitated their changes and shifts in their sense of belonging and identity, which will be presented in the next chapter.

[428] Trang Hoang and Ly Thi Tran, "Understanding International Students' Adaptation Motivation," in *Educational Reciprocity and Adaptivity: International Students and Stakeholders*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018).
[429] Blake Hendrickson, Devan Rosen and R. Kelly Aune, "An Analysis of Friendship Networks, Social Connectedness, Homesickness, and Satisfaction Levels of International Students," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 35, no. 3 (2011): 290.

Chapter 7 Various aspects of changes experienced by Chinese students

In the last chapter, the social experiences of the study participants in Germany were presented. We saw the various ways in which the interviewed Chinese students responded to and cooperated with different situations and networks while physically being in a new and foreign cultural and linguistic environment. In this chapter, I will explore the various changes and shifts in these participants after studying and living in Germany for a while, in order to respond to the third research objective: **What changes did the students experience in Germany, and how did these changes develop**? From the data analysis of my interviews with students, I found that many of the changes were actually subtle, sometimes more subtle than the participants themselves could detect or realize.

The narratives uncovered in my interviews revealed multiple themes that demonstrated a spectrum of changes in students' identity and their sense of belonging. These ranged from an intensified experience of Chinese national attachment to more diverse personal transformative experiences. Negotiating one's identity in a foreign cultural setting can be a challenging process, but this process contains a transformative potential that offered these young students a great opportunity to reflect as well to explore themselves. In the following section, I will discuss seven themes regarding changes that emerged from the collected data: 1) changes in daily routines; 2) changes in political attitudes; 3) changes in personal growth and self-discovery; 4) changes in a sense of belonging in Germany; 5) changes in perceptions of Germans and Germany; 6) changes of understanding about "Chineseness" and 7) changes of their decisions to stay or to leave.

7.1. Changes in daily routines

7.1.1 Chinese names or Western names

Names are usually perceived as markers of identity. The question of "What is your name?" should have been a straightforward question. However, for many of the Chinese students I interviewed, their answers to this question were often associated with hesitation, self-conscious explanations, and sometimes repeated corrections when they talked to non-Chinese people. To the participants in this study, the first challenges they encountered directly included self-presentation, especially in terms of the names with which they introduced themselves when

they socialised with new people in Germany. Before coming to Germany, the majority of the participants had already adopted international names for themselves or been assigned Western names by their English or German language teachers back home. It is not uncommon in China for the younger generation who were born and raised in the 1990s have more than one name: they have a birth name given by their family and an alternative English name adopted later when they started to learn English in school or/and later in university, especially if they have been taught by non-Chinese English teachers (or German teachers). However, according to the statements made by the participants in this study who already had a Western name before going to Germany, their use of this Western name was mainly limited to their foreign language courses rather than their daily life in China.

In the first-round interview with my participants, many stated that, when they came to Germany, they introduced themselves with their Western names or offered the option of their Western names when they socialised with Germans and other international students on campus. This led me to be curious about the reasons for this and to wonder if this would change over time because the change of one's attitude toward name-adoption is very critical and the motivation for choosing a new name in a foreign land is never trivial.

7.1.1.1 Reasons of choice of a Western name

The main concern for participants like M15, F10, and F8 was the mispronunciation of their names. F10 stated: "*The introduction always ended up with how to pronounce my Chinese name if I introduced my Chinese name, and it becomes like a lesson and it makes me feel that I am very different. Even though I understand people are just really attempting to show respect to my Chinese culture, it's still annoying."* (June 2014, second interview)

M15 claimed: "*My name is very hard to pronounce for Westerners. No matter how hard they tried, they would just fail to say it right. It doesn't sound like my name at all. So, it's better that I just go with my German name, Hannah*[430]*."* (May 2014, first interview)

F8 shared a similar experience: "*Well, it sounds stupid when they say my Chinese name with the wrong pronunciation. It sounds and means 'very pretty' in Chinese, but when Germans say*

[430] Pseudonym.

it, it sounds like a dirty word, which is completely wrong[...] *It's embarrassing."* (May 2014, informal interview)

F8 said: "*My name is not easy for the Westerners, you see. So, if I introduce myself with my Chinese name, no one can say it right and it sounds strange to me and them. I will be 'the Chinese' with a strange name to them, so it's better to give them my German name so it's easy to communicate for us."* (May 2014, informal interview)

As mentioned above, many participants believed that Western names were easier than Chinese names for native German speakers to pronounce as well as to remember, and therefore Western names seemed to make them feel more approachable in a foreign social environment. On the other hand, the perception that one's Chinese name is a "strange name" and feels "very different" further contributed to the decision not to use one's Chinese name. In this sense, Western names could be interpreted as hiding rather than revealing one's distinctiveness.

7.1.1.2 Negotiations of one's name

There is a discrepancy between what one wishes to be called and how others perceive one's identity in a foreign country. Because identity is a mutual concession and is a contentious issue that requires reflection and negotiation from both sides,[431] many participants confirmed that they sometimes had to negotiate for the name that they wanted other to call them.

For example, F4 was born into a Chinese Muslim family and had two names: one was her Chinese name, which was on her official documents, and the other was her Islamic name in Chinese (*Jingming*, 经名). She explained that "Hana"[432] was a name given by her uncle who served as a religious leader in her community. "Hana" was the name used by her friends and family in China, whereas her Chinese name only showed up on official documents.

When she arrived in Germany, she decided to introduce herself as "Hana." In our first- round interview, she revealed how she felt at that moment when she introduced her Islamic name to

[431] Howard Ramos, "It was always there? Looking for identity in all the (not) so obvious places", in *Talking about Identity: Encounters in Race, Ethnicity, and Language*, ed. Carl E. James and Adrienne L. Shadd (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001), 108.
[432] Pseudonym.

German friends: "*You can see people seemed a bit surprised and wondered* [...] *On the one hand, I was grateful that they made the effort to want to use my Chinese name. But on the other hand, it was also very clear that they didn't accept that I could have a name which sounds similar to German names. I have been using this name since my birth. I feel like it belongs to me, and it is me* […] *When I said that I was Hana, people always asked me, 'What is your real name?' Well, to me, Hana is my real name* [...] *What can I do? I can't force people to call me Hana, can I?"* (July 2014, informal interview)

Hana felt that she had to always "explain" or "justify" the legitimacy of her Islamic name because it didn't seem to suffice on its own. Being asked about her "real" name made her feel that her identity was somehow being scrutinised by others.

This demand for congruency could be frustrating for students like Hana or M15, who was named Alex[433]. Alex had had that name since he was 13 years old: "*I had this name when I was attending an English club, and my English teacher gave me the name. All the foreign teachers from the US and Canada called me Alex* [...] *I am Alex. I felt part of them when they called me Alex. Why can I not be Alex here in Germany?*" (March 2015, second interview)

For M15, to be accepted as "Alex" seemed to symbolize membership access to his new environment. His German professors and classmates prefer to use his Chinese name as a way to show respect for his "real identity," but this seemed to be a refusal of membership to Alex. He also realised that, as an international student, he had to use his Chinese name on official documents and assignments. In our interview, he recalled several occasions where "Alex" was "not official," and therefore not accepted, such as when he was handing in his homework as well as in the documentation of his enrolment at the university. His Chinese name was the only acceptable one in these institutionalised practices.

The use of easily pronounced Western-style English or German names could generate a good possibility for communication. However, there were cases when German students were confused about their fellow Chinese students' adoption of Western names. For both Alex and Hana, their Chinese name thus became an identity label that could not be negotiated.[434]

[433] Pseudonym.
[434] Wenhao Diao, "Between Ethnic and English Names: Name Choice for Transnational Chinese Students in A US Academic Community," *Journal of International Students* 4, no. 3 (2014): 205-222; Richard Pearce,

Therefore, the students' German counterparts appeared to play a role as validators, which could lead to conflicting situations. Even though M15 clearly accepted "Alex" as an established name that was already part of his identity, he was a bit disappointed to discover that it was not validated by others. In this case, my participant's choice of "Alex" did not necessarily mean that he wanted to become "German" but that he expected to be accepted by locals in Germany through his choice of name.

7.1.1.3 Changes in the choice of names

In both second-round and third-round interviews, as well as during participant observations, it was intriguing to notice many participants started to make changes on their choice of names. M5, for example, started to switch from his Western name to his Chinese name more often because he felt that his authenticity when using a Western name was challenged. He stated in the second interview: "*I met a German classmate who has the same name as me. I felt a bit weird then. I felt like I was a fraud and he was the authentic one. So, I changed my mind after that, and let people call me by my Chinese name, even though sometimes they cannot pronounce it but it's authentic for sure* [...] *Instead of trying to be a fake German, right now I would rather be an* ***authentic*** *Chinese."* (October 2015, second interview)

Others started to reclaim their culturally attached identity. F8 stated: "*Well, I have noticed that other international students, like Japanese, Korean, or Iranian students, all only use their ethnic names. So, I am Chinese, I should protect my name too, my original name. This is who I am. Right now, I have also taught my German friends to call me by my Chinese nickname. Even though their pronunciation is still strange, it makes me feel much more comfortable now."* (July 2016, third interview)

F1 also agreed: "*I found that my German friends were more curious about me when I went by my Chinese name. Chinese names are very special, so I also told them the meaning of my name, and it's like an opening line for a conversation."* (January 2015, second interview)

"Developing Cultural Identity," in Mary Hayden and Jeff Thompson (eds) *International Education: Principles and Practice*, (London, Kogan Page:1998), 44-62.

In addition to the change that some participants made, there were also participants who insisted on letting people within their friend circle address them by their Western names. For example, F9 stated: "*People know me by two names. I am Vanessa and I am also Xin.*[435] *Some call me Vanessa and some call me Xin. I feel comfortable with both names. Some of my German friends call me Xinxin if they can say it right; otherwise, they call me Vanessa. Sometimes they even called me Vani as a nickname. Some of my Chinese friends also call me Vani too. I am both Vani and Xinxin. At the beginning I felt like I owed an explanation to Germans, like why I call myself Vanessa. But why cannot a Chinese person have the name Vanessa? It's just a name."* (March 2015, informal interview)

F9's insistence on using a Western name in Germany seems to suggest an effort to free themselves from the subtle expectations that were tethered to their names and faces. Alex also stated that he did not completely give up letting people use his Western name. He spotted that, with the progress of his proficiency in the German language, people gradually accepted him as Alex more. To him, the application of a German name was a sign of linguistic competence. With the improvement of his German language, he felt more confident about introducing himself with his German name.

On the other hand, some participants made other changes: Even though F3 had an English name when she was learning English in China, she never used it when she came to Germany. She was particularly against the concept of "first name" and "last name" because it is "*very eurocentric*." According to the Chinese tradition, family names are placed before given names. Therefore, F3 insisted on introducing herself according to the Chinese way. It seems necessary to note that Chinese Romanised names, which are transliterated based on the *Hanyu Pinyin* system rather than on Chinese characters, are not presented in the way that Chinese people normally use their names in daily life in China. Therefore, F3 gave up signing her name as her Chinese name with *Pinyin* but started signing with Chinese characters, although it seemed very different compared to the German writing system. She said:

"*I am Chinese and it's very special, so why should we follow the European way*?" (December 2015, second interview)

[435] Both names are pseudonyms.

For her, Chinese names are based on characters, each with a specific word connotation, and the idea that a name is somehow "meaningful" is important in Chinese culture. The *Pinyin* version of her Chinese names could not represent her completely, because a Chinese name only with *Pinyin* can indicate different meanings.

She also said, "*My name is extremely complicated. Almost no one can pronounce it right. To avoid trouble, I asked people to use my family name, Li. So, the first year in Germany, I became Li. It took me so long to get used to the new style of my name. Sometimes I didn't even realise it was me when classmates called me Li on campus. When I was learning English and German, I used several Western names and thought it was fancy to have a name like that. But when I really landed in Germany, I never used the names like Alice or Amanda.* [...] *So my friends can be divided into two groups: one is the group who call me Li, my family name, which is easy; the other group use my given name, but it is more complicated to pronounce. With the second group, I always felt comfortable correcting their pronunciation, and they all became my real friends.*" (December 2015, second interview)

F3's words were significant to my understanding of identity and names. According to Guccini, names in the transcultural space are subject to "discourse of both agency and compliance, [which,] depending on individual positioning in social space, accentuates their capacity to empower and disempower at the same time."[436] Clearly, F3 was very assertive regarding her choice of name in the transcultural setting, and she took the agency to position herself as "Chinese" to mark her own uniqueness in Germany.

7.1.2 Changes in Language behaviour

Language reflects users' identity too as language and identity are also related to each other closely.[437] Language is one of the biggest challenges that Chinese students face in my study. I have also observed different changes that students have gone through during my study.

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[436] Federica Guccini, "A 'Sense of Recognition': Negotiating Naming Practices and Identities of Overseas Chinese Students in Transcultural Social Spaces," *GISCA Occasional Paper Series*, No. 12. (Göttingen, Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology: 2017), 61.

[437] Will Baker, *Culture and Identity through English as a Lingua Franca* (Hawthorne, NY: De Gruyter, 2015); Mingyue (Michelle) Gu, John Patkin and Andy Kirkpatrick, "The Dynamic Identity Construction in English as Lingua Franca Intercultural Communication: A Positioning Perspective," *System* 46 (2014): 131-142.

7.1.2.1 "*I have a Chinese accent.*"

As a German literature student, F10 already had a thorough knowledge of German language before coming to Germany. In our first interview at the beginning of her first semester, she told me: "*I want to improve my German fast by losing my Chinese accent* [...] *I think the only way to mingle with German students is to be able to speak German without any foreign accent. At the moment I cannot really hang out with them at all, because I always have a Chinese accent*." (November 2015, first interview)

During my participant observation, I noticed that F4 was especially nervous and self-conscious when she talked to her German classmates. She attributed her difficulty in mingling with her German classmates to her Chinese accent when she spoke German. This understanding of herself as a foreign language user did not lead her to position herself as a legitimate or authentic speaker of the German language with her Chinese accent.[438] She believed that her "deficient" German marginalised her in social situations.

Therefore, she kept quiet and invisible in class and did not manage to form any friendships with her classmates until her third semester, when another international student from Peru joined one of her seminars. F4 noticed that when her Peruvian classmate spoke German, she had a very heavy accent. However, to her surprise, she was a very active student and soon became popular in class: "*My German classmates found her so special, and they even adored her accent*."

She gradually changed her view on her ability in foreign languages. In our third interview, she told me: "*I started to speak more German in class now because I am a foreign student here anyway. I was not born here. We don't have to be so harsh on ourselves. I feel lighter to speak more now. I can speak German, English and now I am learning French*." (October 2016, third interview)

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[438] Claire Kramsch, "Authenticity and legitimacy in multilingual SLA," *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 1, no. 1(2012):107–128.

F4 also told me with excitement that she had found her research interest for her master's thesis, which was related to Chinese-German translation in literature because she was the only student in class who could read Chinese literature. She was not as self-conscious as she was at the beginning. Even though she still spoke German with a noticeable Chinese accent, she started to recognise that her variety of German could be an asset that contributed to the diversity of her class. More importantly, she started to identify herself as a multilingual speaker, which could help her to "draw on multiple cultural frames of reference in the same conversation, and move between and across local, national and global contexts in dynamic ways."[439]

F4's earlier concern about judging and being judged by others, therefore, seemed to have been benchmarked against native speaker standards. The ultimate ideal of nativeness made her very self-conscious when she was expressing herself because she was overpowered by her own "inadequacies" while voicing herself in German. Whenever the act of evaluation occurred, the benchmark was always an idealised understanding of the native German speaker. She considered all non-nativeness to be inferior and therefore worthless and undesirable.

However, after listening to her fellow international student, F4 began to try to base her assessment benchmarks on what mutual intelligibility and comprehension could achieve, rather than trying to approximate the standards of a native speaker. This orientation towards comprehensibility rather than sounding like a native speaker alleviated the pressure on her. As a result, she began to feel optimistic about her ability to communicate with German speakers and even felt that being found to be a non-native speaker was an advantage: "*My German classmates think it's cute that I have an accent, because it's special. It means that I made my effort to learn a new language.*" (February 2017, third interview)

Thus, F4 instead began to feel proud that she had taken the time and effort to learn a foreign language, and she began to believe that her German language skills could be respected by native German speakers in Germany. In this way, she became less mindful of acknowledging being Chinese or foreign compared to her previous beliefs. Her goal started to change from making herself sound like a native speaker to making herself understood and listened to. In our fourth interview, she had actually begun to believe that speaking with a Chinese accent or sometimes

[439] Will Baker, *Culture and Identity Through English as A Lingua Franca* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, Inc., 2015), 95.

not so "authentically" helped her to accept herself more, rather than always judging herself by native German standards. She explained: "*When I was not afraid to speak German, I would speak more, even with many mistakes and with a Chinese accent. I found that Germans were usually surprised that someone from China could speak German fluently.*" (October 2018, fourth interview) As a result, her "foreignness" and all her efforts to learn a new language were recognised. In this way, through her "foreignness," she was able to make herself heard and be considered a successful language learner and achiever.[440]

In conclusion, F4 had changed the way she regarded to native speakers as a foreign language learner. When she regarded the native speaker as the only ideal, she actually silenced her voice. This view inhibited her from speaking up, and she felt afraid to be herself. Her new way of regarding native speakers actually empowered her and enabled her to speak out for herself.[441] She even took pride in being a German speaker as a Chinese person.

7.1.2.2 "*Do you speak English*?"

Some of my participants reached C1 level proficiency in German but still lacked daily vocabulary. M5, a biology student, shared with me in our first interview in 2014 that he was looking forward to practising his German, but in our second interview in his second year, he confirmed a change in his choice of languages:

"*When I was talking to my German classmates, I could not understand them. They spoke very fast. I felt like an idiot. When I spoke, I also felt like an idiot. So, I have switched to English when I speak to them now, even though my English is not that good, but because neither of our mother tongues is English, it's fair*." (November 2015, second interview)

As M5 noted, speaking English as a lingua franca[442] seemed like a "fair" option for him when communicating with his German counterparts. This implies that speaking German made him

[440] Mareike Müller and Barbara Schmenk, "Narrating the Sound of Self: The Role of Pronunciation in Learners' Self-Constructions in Study-Abroad Contexts," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 27, no. 1 (2015): 132-151, doi:10.1111/ijal.12109.
[441] Müller and Schmenk, "Narrating the Sound of Self: The Role of Pronunciation in Learners' Self-Constructions in Study-Abroad Contexts."
[442] Babara Seidlhofer, "English as a lingua franca," in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English*, ed. A.S. Hornby (Oxford: Oxford University Press:2005), 339.

feel inferior or that he was in an "unfair" and disadvantageous position when he talked to a native speaker. As Cummin explained, there is a power interplay involved in the identity negotiation process in foreign language communication.[443] For M5, speaking English meant empowering himself in intercultural communication, while speaking German means constraining himself.[444]

M2 also changed his language preference when speaking to English from German in his second year, because of his anxiety and uncertainty about the address system:[445] "*I was never sure if I should use 'Du' or 'Sie'*." The German language keeps the "T-V distinction,"[446] which can be quite challenging for language learners. Even though students were taught that "Sie" is for respect and "Du" is more casual and applies to familiar people, this system can be complicated. "Familiarity" can be equated with "closeness" and "amicability," but it can also be equated with "rudeness" and "discourtesy."[447] Several participants revealed that they felt that they were trapped in the "Du-Sie" dichotomy and confused by its use in real daily life with German contacts.

"*My professor started to call me by first name, so I thought I could address the professor with 'Du.' But to my surprise he still addresses me with 'Sie.' This is so confusing and embarrassing to me."* (March 2015, second interview)

Therefore, M2 decided to speak English more often. Since "you" can be used both informally and formally in modern English, it has a neutral meaning, thus crossing possible social divides. To avoid the awkwardness of the T-V distinction, the universal application of "you" in English helped my participants save themselves from embarrassment.

Some students used English to position themselves in conversation with German counterparts. Van Langenhove and Harre outlined three forms of positioning: self-positioning, forced self-

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443 Jim Cummins, *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment* (Los Angeles, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education, 2001).
444 Cummins, *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment.*
445 Raymond Hickey, "The German Address System," in *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems, Pragmatics and Beyond*, ed. Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker, New Series, Vol. 107 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), 401- 425.
446 Roger William Brown and Abert. Gilman, "The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity," in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology,1960), 253-76.
447 Manuela Cook, "Beyond T and V – Theoretical Reflections on the Analysis of Forms of Address," *American Journal of Linguistics* 3, no.1(2014): 17-26, DOI: 10.5923/j.linguistics.20140301.03

positioning, and the deliberate positioning of others. Among them, self-positioning occurs when individuals attempt to express their agency to achieve a particular goal in their discursive practice.[448] Participants who actively chose to speak English seemed to use a self-position strategy: they wanted to gain an advantageous position, or at least "equal" position, while interacting with their German classmates. Their deliberate choice of English as their communication language also impelled their German classmates to speak English in return, which position them as foreign language speakers too. In this way, Chinese students created a temporary in-group of "non-natives speakers" and shared common ground with their German classmates.[449] This negotiation of subtle power relations also helped to construct a cultural "third place," which established rapport by engaging in "safe talk" and smoother socialisation.[450] Here Kramsch's idea of a "third place" should not be seen as a place but rather as a symbolic process of meaning-making that offered participants the chance to "jump out" of the duality of national languages and cultures (German and Chinese).[451]

7.1.2.3 "*Bitte lass uns Deutsch sprechen!*"

M1 was a math major whose courses were taught in English. At the very beginning of his semester, he could not speak fluent German. *"For me, English is enough, because my class is taught in English and I didn't have enough time and energy to learn German*" (October 2014, first interview). However, he encountered some unpleasant situations during his second year. "[…] *I went to the library to return books and the librarian only spoke German to me. I asked him if he could speak English and he asked me provocatively: 'If you couldn't speak German why were you here in Germany?' I was so upset but ashamed too and I didn't even know how to answer him.*" (March 2015, second interview)

He realised that, in order to "blend in," the German language was a must even though he did not need it in class. Therefore, he took intensive German courses and reached B2 level after

[448] Luk Van Langenhove and Rom Harre, "Cultural Stereotypes and Positioning Theory," *Journal for The Theory of Social Behaviour* 24, no. 4 (1994): 359-372.
[449] Brigitte Planken, "Managing Rapport in Lingua Franca Sales Negotiations: A Comparison of Professional and Aspiring Negotiators," *English For Specific Purposes* 24, no. 4 (2005): 381-400.
[450] Claire Kramsch, *Context and Culture in Language Learning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
[451] Ibid.

two years. In our fourth interview, in 2017, he shared with me what he regarded as contemptuousness:

"[…] *when I spoke German, they* [his classmates] *insisted on speaking English with me. I wanted to practice my German, not English. And their English is not good and sometimes with a strong German accent, which I cannot understand. They are just trying to show off. It's very rude and condescending. I don't understand now: when I spoke English, they thought I should have learnt German. Now I do speak German, and they want to speak English to me. It made me so angry because it seemed that they still regarded me as a foreigner and assumed that I didn't speak German. This made me feel very bad*." (March 2017, fourth interview)

Receiving a response in English instead of German from locals was a sign for M1 at this stage that he had been positioned as an outsider. For him, at that moment, this signified that his Germans contacts did not accept his claim of belonging, even though he insisted on speaking German to feel "blended in." Such was the case for several other students in my study too, especially for those who were already equipped with a good knowledge of German and had been in Germany for a longer period of time.

In summary, the above examples in my study revealed students' different experiences and their understanding of the changes in their language behaviours and responses. Identity is produced within social interaction, and it is fluid and changing rather than a pre-existing category or a natural fact.[452] It is not only possessed but also performed, and each individual performs a repertoire of various identities. Identity is expressed in and through language choice, and one cannot be detached from the other. These Chinese students' language behaviours with their German contacts reflected their identity and changing sense of belonging, no matter whether the change was from being quiet to recognising the legitimacy of different types of German and multiple language learners or switching from speaking German to speaking English only in order to create a neutral third space. To some extent, these changes also reflected House's distinction between "languages for communication" and "languages for identification."[453] The insertion of particular varieties of German reflected the students' identities as Chinese people in Germany. The use of different languages such as English, German, and Chinese among the

[452] Aneta Pavlenko, *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2006).
[453] Juliane House, "English as A Lingua Franca: A Threat to Multilingualism?" *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7, no. 4 (2003): 556, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9841.2003.00242.x.

participants also showed that they were taking ownership of their multiple language resources and wanted to present a multilingual self, as a badge of identity that could separate them from students at home, but also from other Chinese students studying in other countries, for example, those studying in countries where only English is spoken.

This also confirmed what Li termed the full range of linguistic performances as "translanguaging space," in which he defined language as a process and therefore a verb instead of a noun: *"Though the act of translanguaging, it creates a social space for the multilingual language users by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience*."[454] Therefore, by "translanguaging" actively, these Chinese students also gained the ability to reconfigure their identities in Germany.

7.1.3 Changes in eating habits and food consumption

Food purchases and cooking and eating practices are normative structures and routine activities rooted in everyday life. Food is not only a necessary consumer good but also a meaningful form of communication.[455] What people eat and how they eat it plays an important role in Chinese culture. Previous studies have explored the relationship between Chinese sojourners' food consumption behaviour and their identity as sojourners. Researchers have argued that geographical context changes and reshapes the consumption patterns of young students and that what Chinese students eat is important, both physically and emotionally.[456]

7.1.3.1 Homemade Chinese food

[454] Li Wei, "Moment Analysis and Translanguaging Space: Discursive Construction of Identities by Multilingual Chinese Youth in Britain," *Journal of Pragmatics* 43, no. 5 (2011): 1222-1235.
[455] Hanne Torjusen, Sangstad Lotte, Katherin O'Doherty Jensen and Unni Kjærnes, "European Consumers' Conceptions of Organic Food: A Review of Available Research," *Professional Report*, no.4 (2004).
[456] Dorothy Ai-wan Yen et al., "Food Consumption When Travelling Abroad: Young Chinese Sojourners' Food Consumption in The UK," *Appetite* 121 (2018): 198-206, doi:10.1016/j.appet.2017.11.097.

Since normally Chinese universities do not offer students dormitories with kitchens, eating in the canteen or in small restaurants has become a routine for Chinese university students. With the boom of online delivery service in China, the post-1980s and '90s generation tends to cook less than their parents, eating out and ordering instead. However, compared to their peers at home, my participants who lived in Germany could not obtain the same variety from on-line delivery in Germany at the same price (except for pizza and fast food). They started to learn to cook Chinese food at home when they were in Germany as a routine. The acquisition of ingredients, initially considered problematic, was quickly solved, as these participants learnt where to buy products and brands, although those living in rural areas may have had to travel further afield to obtain some of the more specific ingredients from larger and better-supplied Chinese supermarkets in cities. Some participants found online shops for the ingredients for Chinese food. However, F3 still enjoyed travelling to a bigger city to shop in person because "*It's so exciting to see the Chinese food in the shop. It just feels like home*" (July 2016, third interview).

While learning to cook home physically satisfied the participants' Chinese taste buds, it also strengthened their bond with family back home. F6 called her mother every time she made food and asked for directions. She said, "*It's a great way to talk to mom, and I get help from her, and she is happy*." F6 always used a pair of chopsticks and a rice bowl that she had brought from home because it reminded her of meals in China. Learning to cook was a first change in food habits for most of the participants when they arrived in Germany.

Some participants still kept a festival diet at certain Chinese festivals and learned to cook this food themselves at home in Germany. Every time M10 came back from China, he would bring Chinese ingredients like special chillies from home, or even some traditional preserved meat packed by his parents, despite the potential danger of it being discovered at customs. Many participants also brought a Chinese rice cooker with them to Germany. Chinese homemade food helped sustain their Chinese identity.[457] Being away from home may have contributed to the formation or reinforcement of "traditional" practices as a way of filling a certain sense of "absence."

[457] Mira Crouch and Grant O'Neill, "Sustaining Identities? Prolegomena for Inquiry into Contemporary Foodways," *Social Science Information* 39, no. 1 (2000): 181-192, doi:10.1177/053901800039001010.

On the other hand, many participants also emphasised that they enjoyed cooking Chinese food by themselves rather than eating out at local Chinese restaurant, because first, the food was normally not very authentic to them and, second, the decoration and dining environment in the Chinese restaurants were normally very "old-fashioned" and did not look or feel "Chinese" to them. "*It's really not comfortable to sit in there. It's not Chinese nor Western, and it's just strange. The decoration of the Chinese restaurants is very old-fashioned too. It gave the impression that China is so old-fashioned and under-developed."* (July 2016, informal interview)

7.1.3.2 Global brands or franchised brands

Despite my participants' interest in Chinese cooking, to my surprise, I found that some of them consumed more global brand food while in Germany, such as food from Subway, KFC, or Burger King. On the one hand, many urban young Chinese were very familiar with the fast-food chains back in China, it offered as a safe choice for the young students. As M3 stated: "*Because I am familiar with the food there, and the environment also looked similar everywhere*." On the other hand, Global brands (or sometimes American brands) indicate a sense of belonging as a global youth or serves as a symbol of cosmopolitanism.[458] This provided many participants who would like to consume global brand fast-food while living in Germany not only a "comfort zone" away from home, but also a reassured global or cosmopolitan sense of belonging.[459]

Instead, for special occasions, many participants chose to go to German franchise restaurants with international food presentation such as Vapiano[460] and Sausalito[461]. When M6 travelled around Germany, he normally chose this type of chain restaurant too: "*The atmosphere is more welcoming and relaxed compared to other traditional and local German restaurants. The food is better too*." On the one hand, he knew what he was getting, and, on the other hand, the

[458] Athena H.N. Mak et al., "Factors Influencing Tourist Food Consumption," *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 31, no. 3 (2012): 928-936, doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2011.10.012.
[459] This result also confirmed the findings from Dorothy Ai-wan Yen et al., "Food Consumption When Travelling Abroad: Young Chinese Sojourners' Food Consumption in the UK", *Appetite* 121 (2018): 198-206, doi:10.1016/j.appet.2017.11.097.
[460] Vapiano is a chain restaurant that serves mainly Italian food. For more details see https://www.vapiano.com/en/about-us/our-story/
[461] Sausalito is a chain restaurant with emphasis on the California lifestyle and multicultural environment. For more information, see https://www.sausalitos.de/story/.

globalised and multicultural lifestyle these franchises promote seemed to fit into the cosmopolitan identity some of the participants were looking for. In other words, this kind of eating-out experience to some extent shaped their identity as globalised youth.

7.1.3.3 German influence

Compared to international food, many participants in this study seemed to have difficulties appreciating German food. However, many participants' dining practices were influenced from living in Germany, even though they did not consume German food directly. It seems some participants did change some food habits gradually, and many students also realised differences in manners, e.g., they realized that slurping one's food at table was regarded as rude in Germany. M4 started to prepare foods more often by methods such as baking instead of frying, adding cheese or butter/margarine to foods, eating more salad, and drinking coffee, which were all new to him. F8 was more relaxed about eating her lunch late ("*It's okay to eat at 2 o'clock*") whereas, at the beginning of her stay in Germany, she was very anxious when her German friends invited her to eat after 12 o'clock. Although these changes might appear too trivial to mention, they have some significance as they showed that participants were adjusting to daily life in Germany.

It is worth noting that some participants changed their concepts about food consumption during their stay in Germany. Germany has played a leading role in promoting organic food in Europe.[462] F3 turned from being an occasional organic food consumer to a regular organic food consumer.[463] She bought food from the Alnatur store, one of the largest organic specialist chains in Germany. She became interested in gathering information about the origin of her food and more information about the food chain. F4 bought organic snacks as gifts for her friends and family back home, in order to share the German lifestyle with them. Like M2, M8 also preferred to spend more money on organic food. Compared with the recent emerging trend of concern for food quality and safety in urban China, the "organic food" movement also highlights food's moral value, leading people to focus on the environment, animals, and

[462] BOLW (2013) The Organic Sector 2013—Numbers, Data, Facts, 2013. Association of Organic Agriculture. (in German) http://www.boelw.de/zdf.html

[463] Dörthe Krömker and Ellen Matthies, "Differences Between Occasional Organic and Regular Organic Food Consumers in Germany," *Food and Nutrition Sciences* 05, no. 19 (2014): 1914-1925, doi:10.4236/fns.2014.519203.

workers' rights (e.g. fair trade).[464] As food choices have become an expression of personal identity, buying organic food may convey more than just following a fashionable trend; rather, it can mark identification with a more responsible community.[465] One participant said, "*It's not only for ourselves, because I trust German food for its quality anyway, but it's more about our attitude towards nature that I learnt it here*" (August 2017, third interview).

In sum, we can say that food not only plays a material role but is also the intersection of many symbolic meanings with cultural, environmental, and moral dimensions.[466] Participants kept Chinese eating habits at home as a routine, but also learnt to accept new concepts and make new compromises to keep their identity balanced in an intercultural environment. These participants' eating practices were (re)shaped by their daily experiences in Germany.

7.2 Changes in political attitudes

This study uncovered a range of changes regarding the participants' political attitudes. These changes mainly consisted of four themes: 1) the development of a strong allegiance toward the Chinese state, 2) the development of an ambivalent attitude toward the Chinese state (some participants did not comply with the old rules from the state and therefore developed strategic choices), 3) increased activity in political participation and discussion, especially related to minorities, 4) the development of more support toward refugees in Germany.

7.2.1 Developing a strong allegiance toward the Chinese state

While the students were living abroad in Germany, non-belonging to the host country could trigger their original national sentiment toward China. Some participants in this study thus developed a stronger sense of allegiance with the Chinese state. Some of them became more

[464] Hanne Torjusen et al., "European Consumers' Conceptions of Organic Food: A Review of Available Research," (National Institute for Consumer Research, 2004), http://orgprints.org/2490/1/haccprapport.pdf, accessed on 12th February 2019.
[465] Marijaana Lindeman and Minaa Sirelius, "Food Choice Ideologies: The Modern Manifestations of Normative and Humanist Views of the World," *Appetite,* 37 no.3 (2001):175-184, https://doi.org/10.1006/appe.2001.0437
[466] James Allison, "Eating Green(s). Discourses of Organic Food," in *Environmentalism. The View from Anthropology*, ed. Kay Milton (London: Routledge:1993), 203-218.

receptive to the official Chinese propaganda while in Germany. The widespread outrage in China at past inequalities and lost greatness, the students' own difficulty in connecting with local German society, and the propaganda of patriotism led these students to feel little tolerance for criticism from abroad.

This political recognition granted students a sense of belonging to the Chinese state. Even though they were living in a democratic country beyond the control of the Chinese state and were provided with free access to knowledge and surrounded by the international media,[467] some participants showed little interest in investigating more. While living in Germany, some of these Chinese students still chose to be surrounded only by Chinese media dominated by the views and narratives of the Chinese government, while some of the students in my study changed their channels to access new information. At the beginning of their time abroad, some students believed that the media "in the West" was very biased and projected a "wrong" image of China. In the digital era, even if one is in Germany, one can continue to be dominated by the Chinese media. Many students' information reception channels were dominated by Chinese-language media, but not necessarily by Chinese state media.

Some participants in my study felt that there was a need for them to be diplomats and represent China; they felt the obligation to defend China. For example, M6 became a champion of Chinese foreign policy:

"*My German classmate asked where I came from, and I told them about China. Then he added 'Which China?' To be honest, I was so shocked by this question. I could hear my inner voice was telling me to be calm and this was the time for me to repay my motherland now. So, after a few seconds, I replied to him in a peaceful but firm voice: there is only one China*." (April 2015, first interview)

At this moment, the question of "Which China?" has become a salient political question for students from the People's Republic of China (in contrast to Taiwan, whose official name is the Republic of China). Claiming that there was only one China seemed to close a discursive space that could be filled with exciting, productive dialogue and some mutual understanding.[468]

[467] Chongyi Feng, "The Changing Political Identity of the 'Overseas Chinese' in Australian Politics," *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 3, no. 1 (2011): 121-138.
[468] Ien Ang, "The Differential Politics of Chineseness," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 22, no. 1 (1994): 75.

7.2.1.1 A film that reflects the sentiment: *Wolf Warrior 2*

In 2017, a film called *Wolf Warrior 2* that reflected a heroic picture of China as a rising power reclaiming its position in the centre of the world order became a massive success in China. The plot featured a veteran Chinese soldier, Leng Feng, as a superhero who is confronted by a group of deadly Western mercenaries who were hired to assassinate him by a vicious drug lord in a nameless African country. As a hero, Leng defeats the mercenaries by himself, and most importantly, saves both Chinese and African lives. This film became an unprecedented commercial success and has become the highest-grossing Chinese film ever released.

When the film was released in Germany, the CSSA in my university organised a group ticket for students who were interested. On that night, over 50 Chinese students went to the movie theatre, and five of my interview partners also joined them.

The film ends with the cover of a Chinese passport with a short note: "Citizens of the People's Republic of China: When you are in danger overseas, don't give up! Remember that behind you stands your strong motherland."

Figure 2. A screenshot at 01:57:16 of the film[469]

My participants applauded at the end of the movie, and no one wanted to leave after the lights were on. I found my neighbours, F7 and F9, were deeply touched by the film, with tears in their eyes. Other participants made comments such as:

[469] Wu Jing, *Wolf Warrior II*, film (Beijing: Deng Feng International Media, 2017).

"*I am so proud of being a Chinese and having a Chinese passport.*" (September 2017, informal interview)

"*China is really good. When I was in Shanghai, I could go out at 12 midnight, but in Germany I don't dare to go out in the evening because public security is not as good as in China."* (September 2017, informal interview)

"I can come to Germany to study, you know, because we have the PLA[470] *to support us and to protect our safety."* (September 2017, informal interview)

"I feel I am very proud of being a Chinese citizen. It's so good to have a strong government behind you which can really protect your safety. [...] *My Chinese passport is the protective talisman.*" (September 2017, informal interview)

M14 even watched *Wolf Warrior 2* once in China when he was on holiday and went to the movie theatre again in Germany, because "*It feels different when you watch the film here in Germany because you are abroad right now, and you can feel the movie with your own experience.*" (September 2017, informal interview)

With the slogan "Those who violate our China will be punished from afar" (*fan wo zhonghua zhe sui yuan bi zhu* 犯我中华者虽远必诛), the film offers a special meaning to Chinese students abroad. The film portrays China as the new world leader, especially as the new world power over the West, mainly the United States, and the nameless African country serves as a foil for China's expression of its rising power and the end of its so-called "century of humiliation" that has been indoctrinated into youth since the 1990s through patriotic education.[471]

My participants supported the heroic narrative of a rising China that the film *Wolf Warrior 2* was trying to reveal to its audience.[472] Its message resonated with these young Chinese students'

[470] People's Liberation Army is the armed forces in People's republic of China.
[471] Chih-ming Wang, "New China in New Times," in"Wolf Warrior II: The Rise of China and Gender/Sexual Politics," ed. Chih-ming Wang, *MCLC Resource Centre,* 2018, http://u.osu.edu/mclc/online-series/liu-rofel/. accessed on June 2, 2019.
[472] Ibid.

nationalist sentiment abroad. The Chinese government makes considerable effort to be a prominent presence in the Chinese student community in order to promote Chinese students' loyalty and sympathy to the regime in Beijing. This resonated with many of the students in this study. For example, when the coronavirus pandemic spread to Germany in 2020, Chinese students in Germany received masks from Chinese consulates there to protect themselves against the virus. Many of my participants who were still in Germany were very touched by this action. M9 said, "*It feels so safe as a Chinese citizen in Germany at this moment. Your motherland is taking care of your safety and health abroad. We are not left alone here in Germany."* (April 2020, informal interview)

Another participant stated, "*Only the Chinese government can be this responsible to its citizens. Germans still don't have masks, but we do."* (April 2020, informal interview)

To conclude, students who experienced this type of development gained a stronger loyalty to and support for the Chinese regime. They seemed to anthropomorphise the state as a loving mother who was taking care of them, especially when they were abroad in Germany. A stronger sense of belonging to the state was thus evoked. The lack of belonging in Germany also contributes to the development of these sentiments. The majority of this group of participants did not develop any close local contacts with Germans.

7.2.2 Becoming more open to alternative perspectives

Some of my participants found that, in Germany they began receiving some conflicting messages contrary to those they had received in China. While some endorsed the official position, some participants took a different direction. These students started to have ambivalent feelings about the official Chinese ideology. During my study, some students' responses explicitly articulated their changing attitudes regarding some politically "sensitive" topics.

F10 came across a non-governmental organisation on campus and made acquaintance with a female Tibetan student, Tenzin, from India. At the very beginning of the acquaintance, F10 was surprised to hear the story of Tenzin's family, religious refugees who fled from Tibet to India. This story opened a totally new perspective for F10 on the so-called "sensitive" topic of Tibetans in China. On the other hand, she was afraid that other Chinese students would find

out that she was talking to a Tibetan girl from India. In our first interview, she described the opening conversation she had with Tenzin:

"She told me that she was ***not*** *Chinese, but Tibetan. She lived in India. This was so surprising* […] *I don't dare to tell my friends or family that I met someone like her in Germany."* (June 2015, first interview)

F10 used a very quiet voice during this conversation. It seemed that she was very concerned that other people might hear what she was saying, even though she was whispering to me in Chinese and there were not many local guests sitting around in the coffee shop. She clearly expressed fear, not about Tibetans exactly, but of discussing what is deemed "controversial and political."

F10 showed deep interest in studying the topic of Tibet from alternative perspectives from what she had been taught back in China. She kept in contact with Tenzin on Facebook, instead of WeChat, even though both had WeChat accounts. F10 was very careful about being overheard by someone else. She also went to participate in some activities related to Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal. Once she invited me to watch an independent documentary film about the Tibetan refugees in Nepal organised by Tenzin and her friends in Germany. We were the only Chinese audience members in the cinema.

She reflected in our third interview: "*We are, after all, human beings. We might have different political perspectives but that's because of our different education from childhood. Now I am happy that I got to see a totally different perspective in Germany, and I can understand a bit more from others' point of view* […] *I am still not sure about the facts about the Tibetan issue. But at least I got to know Tenzin here and got to hear her story* […] *Living in Germany gives me opportunities to experience differences and it helps me to accept different voices."* (March 2017, third interview)

Even though it was still difficult for F10 to directly deny the official Chinese narrative about Tibet, she came to understand a bit more about Tibet's political struggle from a more private perspective. She also developed a broader view. When the Dalai Lama was invited to give a talk in Frankfurt, she thought of buying a ticket to attend the talk, "*to find out myself what he really looks like*." However, because of an exam, she gave the idea up. She said, "*It's such a*

great opportunity that I am in Germany and I can explore the differences. But we have to be careful; otherwise, other Chinese would be offended." (October 2017, informal interview)

Another example also confirmed a similar change. F9's assessment of democracy in China changed dramatically, and this was reflected in her response: "*Now I realise that one should be able to criticize the government. People should not only have one voice or only to agree.*" This caused her to reflect quite profoundly on her attitude towards the Chinese government. She also began to question the information she had received during her early education in China.[473]

Some students were not satisfied with consumption of the official Chinese media such as the *People's Daily* or *Xinhua*: many started to obtain information from German mainstream media like *Der Spiegel*, the English BBC, or American media such as CNN. However, there were also participants who were more inclined to investigate more personal voices, such as YouTube channels.[474] M8 watched individual programs commenting on Chinese politics on YouTube on a daily basis because he believed that these influencers explicitly rejected the mainstream news media's veneer of institutional prestige, insistence on objectivity and neutrality, and enforcement of gatekeeping mechanisms.[475]

To conclude, participants who experienced this type of change, contrary to those who felt unquestioning support for the CCP and its regime, revealed a deep interest in understanding society from an alternative perspective. One might expect that people living abroad, seeing a different way of life, would be less nationalistic and more tolerant of different opinions.[476] Some of the students became so-called "double dissidents"–those whose transnational encounters with different ideas and value systems make them at once sceptical of China's model and critical of Western democracy. Furthermore, these participants tended to have ambiguous political orientations: they were now more likely to reject the dichotomous "right or left" labelling and instead associate themselves with other political orientations. Instead of

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[473] Iain Wilson, "Does International Mobility Change Chinese Students' Political Attitudes? A Longitudinal Approach," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 21, no. 3 (2016): 321-337.

[474] E.g. Youtube channel 文昭谈古论今 etc. which is a commentary program regarding Chinese politics with many harsh critiques.

[475] Lewis Rebecca, "Alternative Influence: Broadcasting the Reactionary Right on YouTube (White paper)," (New York: Data & Society Research Institute: 2018).

[476] Iain Wilson, "Does International Mobility Change Chinese Students' Political Attitudes? A Longitudinal Approach," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 21, no. 3 (2016): 321-337, doi:10.1007/s11366-015-9387-6.

becoming cheerleaders for "Western" political views, they were more likely to become informed sceptics.

7.2.3 More understanding and support for the social movements of minorities: A growing sense of political agency

Some participants were observed to show more interest in social movements for minority groups, especially regarding the LGBT community. Even though the 21st century has witnessed a rapid growth in the LGBT community in China, the LGBT community still is not entitled to equal rights.[477] For example, homosexual partnerships and marriage are still not recognised in China and there is no law against stigmatisation or discrimination in China. These policies have been tough on LGBT people. For example, on April 13, 2018, one of China's most influential social network platforms started a three-month "clean-up" campaign targeted at themes including homosexuality, in order to create a "clear and harmonious" on-line community.[478]

After hearing about this incident from the internet, F10 updated her status on her WeChat Moments to voice her dissatisfaction about the stigmatisation of LGBT people in China. This was her first social media update that was related to politics. Her earlier updates had mainly been about food or featured travel photos of herself. F10 met a friend from Germany who had been assigned as a male at birth, but in the second year of their acquaintance, her friend transferred to a female. Even though F10 was surprised by her friend's decision, she was more surprised to see the reaction of her German friend's circle: "*They were just cool about it! No one was gossiping about this decision, and they just accepted and supported her*." When Germany approved the third gender option of "intersex" for public documents in 2018, F10 was very excited and shared this message on her WeChat to her friends: "*I want my friends in China also to be aware of this too.*"

[477] Although the state has removed homosexuality from an official list of mental illness a decade ago.
[478] Zheping Huang, "China's LGBT people came out as a protest against an online ban on gay content. And it worked," QUARTZ, April 16, 2018. https://qz.com/1253130/sina-weibo-withdrew-its-ban-on-gay-content-after-chinas-lgbt-community-came-out-in-protest/, accessed December 12, 2019.

F2 started to show more interest in sign language in her third year in Germany. She came across a gallery that advocated for sign language and equal rights for deaf people in Germany. For the first time, she learned that "sign language" could be counted as a "foreign language" or "a second language." After learning about the difficulties, a deaf person experiences in university and at work, she immediately understood these challenges: *"Because it's like us, Chinese in Germany. Like I didn't understand German at the beginning. That was hard!"* Being abroad in Germany had offered her more access to understanding and sympathy as a minority in a society. "*I never thought about the difficulties of deaf people when I was back in China. I remember seeing a deaf person who was very nasty, and he was begging on the street. That was my only impression about deaf people.*" F2 even started to think about taking sign language lessons at the university because then "*I can communicate with them and learn from them. Society is not equal yet; we should do something about it.*"

In conclusion, some the changes the participants experienced echoed research that has found that transcultural experiences can change political values because there is plasticity of political attitudes when individuals have to respond to changing life experiences during their formative years as they enter into adulthood.[479] Some participants started to participate in more political activities and started to show clear resistance to the official Chinese narrative. They were not satisfied with compliance anymore. This might particularly be due to their lived experience in Germany as a friend and as an observer, and partially also due to their experience as a minority. This experience could lead them to have more empathy and ability to understand the issues facing other minorities, and therefore prompt them to begin advocating for others' rights.

7.2.4 Change in attitude toward refugees in Germany

My participants' changes in political attitudes were also reflected in a change in their attitude towards refugees. Many participants associated refugees with a strong sense of fear of terrorist attacks. Some were afraid of being robbed or attacked by refugees.

[479] Jeanne Watson and Ronald Lippitt, "Cross-cultural experience as a source of attitude change," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* (March 1958), 61–66; Iain Wilson, "Does International Mobility Change Chinese Students' Political Attitudes? A Longitudinal Approach," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 21, no. 3 (2016): 321-337; David Sears, "Political socialization," in *Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby(Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975); Roberta Sigel, *Political Learning in Adulthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

In the first-round interviews, many interviewees rejected the very notion that, since refugees are in a difficult situation, they should be helped. They denied any sense of duty on their part. Some claimed quite the opposite: that the German government's duty was to have empathy towards its own citizens and concern for their safety and that the government should not take upon itself further complications or burdens. These participants stated that they came to Germany with the idea that it was a country of white-skinned people speaking German. They had worries that, as refugees came, it would change their ideal image of Germany. There was a common conception that foreigners in Germany could be differentiated into two categories: those such as Chinese students who were hardworking, willing to learn the culture and language, university educated, and did not depend on the German government; and refugees, who came from Africa or the Middle East, were unwilling to integrate, made trouble, and were financially dependent on the German government. In order to be accepted and welcomed by German society, many participants felt that a clear line must be drawn between themselves and refugees.

Participants M2, M5, F2, and M1 reflected on the reasons why they were opposed to refugee policy in Germany:

"*My friends do not like the refugees because they feel that they work hard every day, but these refugees can just hang around here with money from the German government. Germany's policies for the refugees are too generous. It is easy to make others feel that they have been treated unfairly* [...] *Germans are indeed* '*baizuo*'" (February 2015, second interview)

"Refugees' problems are their own problems, and they should not let other countries carry their burden. It is generous that Germany and other European countries are accepting them, but these countries are not obliged to do this, and they don't have to follow the 'baizuo' style." (March 2016, second interview)

"*Refugees have had a big effect on my life. The trains in Germany are now very dirty. Girls are afraid of being harassed while walking along the streets, and they are afraid of being robbed if they walk alone, especially in the evening. I mean Germans can be a model of 'shengmu' but it's us, the normal people who live here legally, who have to suffer from the consequences.*" (March 2016, informal interview)

"I dislike them because I cannot understand why these refugees don't obey the laws and live their lives peacefully after coming to Germany." (August 2017, informal interview)

One word, *baizuo* (白左), repeatedly appeared in the interview conversations. This popular term literally means the "white left" in Chinese. It first appeared in Chinese online communities and quickly became one of the most popular pejorative descriptions of people who "only" care about topics like immigration, minorities, LGBT issues, and the environment in the years after 2013. The term spread even more widely during the European refugee crisis, when Angela Merkel was labelled a *baizuo* because of her open-door refugee policy.

Because of the popularity of the buzzword, it was not surprising that many participants' attitudes might have been shaped by this discourse. In my study, more than half of the participants in my study disagreed with Merkel's policy, and the rest were mostly indifferent. Only three of them agreed with and supported the immigration policy in my first-round interviews. In the group of participants who disagreed, the narrative and explanations of their position were similar to the anti-*baizuo* discourse online.

However, F7 started to change her attitude because she found out that the grandfather of her good German friend was a refugee. Her friend, as the descendant of a refugee, strongly supported Germany's decision to accept refugees. F7 started to see the positive effect of contacting refugees as an international student: "*We are all foreigners here in Germany and we can support each other*."

More importantly, some participants found a sense of belonging in Germany while supporting and helping refugees there. Take M12 as an example: as someone who had studied how to teach German as a foreign language, he volunteered to teach German to refugees in his city. He was very content with the experience because "*I feel that I am participating in activities in German society now. Secondly, as a foreigner myself, I feel it's quite easy to be accepted by the refugees, who are also outsiders*." After the experience, he felt a greater sense of belonging in Germany.

Furthermore, I also found that individuals who tended to support refugees were more likely to have developed better intercultural communication skills and to have established close friendships with locals.

To sum up, several lived experiences provoked interactions and engagements among young students who would not normally be moved to discuss certain political topics. These experiences led to gradual changes in attitudes. The participants' perceptions of refugees were closely intertwined with their sense of belonging in Germany. However, being more active in politics actually offered an avenue for Chinese students to gain a greater sense of belonging in Germany. Their feelings of sympathy for refugees, and their guilt about doing nothing, were linked to changes in their sense of identity. This identity change helped the participants who experienced it to connect with Germans who supported and helped refugees too.

7.3 Development of self-exploration and personal growth

7.3.1 Self-exploration and personal growth/ self-discovery

As 20-something individuals, the participants in this study were at a special stage of life which served as a transition for them. They were "emerging adults" who were encountering many the uncertainties and challenges that come with studying and living in a foreign country.[480] Studying or living abroad can serve as a catalyst for self-discovery and offers a transformative potential due to direct and prolonged exposure to a different culture(s) while being far from one's familiar environment. Sojourning may therefore result in individuals increasing their transcultural competence as well as changes and development in understanding themselves.[481]

First of all, across all the interviews, one of the most recurrent topics mentioned and discussed was the participants' belief that they had become more independent than they were in China.

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[480] Jeffrey J Arnett, Rita Žukauskienė and Kazumi Sugimura, "The New Life Stage of Emerging Adulthood at Ages 18–29 Years: Implications for Mental Health," *The Lancet Psychiatry* 1, no. 7 (2014): 569-576, doi:10.1016/s2215-0366(14)00080-7.

[481] Tema Milstein, "Transformation Abroad: Sojourning and the Perceived Enhancement of Self Efficacy," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, no. 2 (2005): 217-238, doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.05.005.

Some believed that had developed faster than they would have if they had stayed home. Many students interviewed in the present study distinguished themselves in particular from "*jiaohuan sheng*" (交换生), or exchange students from partner universities. They identified themselves clearly as "degree-seeking" students. Normally, exchange students stay for only one or two semesters, most complicated administrative matters are arranged for them by the partner university. and they normally come with their fellow students, whereas the opposite is true for degree-seeking students.

The participants in this study came to Germany without either a partner university in China or fellow students, and thus were forced to live more independently. It is true that most of the participants had already learnt to be independent since they had left home for university after high school. Since China is a vast country, some participants' universities were located 3,000 km away from their parents' home. However, as M9 explained, the challenge was not only physical distance but facing a completely different environment including a different language and culture. The participants had to learn to deal with things by themselves (cooking, housing, insurance, etc.) in a new culture. Since most of the participants' family members had never been abroad, they could not obtain concrete suggestions from family either. The students had to learn to deal with these problems by themselves.

Secondly, self-efficacy is a result of facing challenges and difficulties. Many participants articulated that they had become more confident and mature due to their experiences in Germany. For M5, becoming confident manifested itself in his new belief that he could go anywhere in this world and survive "*no matter how foreign the environment is*." F1 felt that she had become a "true adult" who could take care of herself well. For M11, becoming independent also meant regulating himself as well. He said, "*When I was in Chinese university, there were always roommates, classmates and teachers beside you, and you were always under certain control. But here you are absolutely alone, and no one is checking in on you. You have to build a strong self-discipline*" (March 2014, first interview).

Thirdly, freedom was also important while the participants were exploring themselves. One said, "*Here, no one knows me. It's free. I can start a completely new life here in Germany*." This sense of non-belonging offered anonymity, and therefore a sense of personal expansion and openness to difference. The experience of freedom in settlement and commitment was also

demonstrated and celebrated in the participants' awareness of their development.

Take F10 as an example, during her holidays, she travelled extensively within Europe and had learnt to drive, swim, and ski. She said, "*Those experiences are just like expansion of myself!*" Her approach to her experience in Germany was to seize the opportunity to participate in new adventures for herself, not merely to "fit in" to the local place.

Different from immigrants, students who are not certain about their permanent plans to stay or to return home have more potential to enjoy their time abroad. The participants in this study who did not intend to stay in Germany permanently tended to have more space and time to expand their horizons and enjoy new experiences. Those who intended to immigrate permanently were more susceptible to the pressures of assimilation and tended to curb their desire to enjoy themselves.[482]

Fourthly, many participants also learnt to manage their negative emotions such as stress and frustration. Some other participants underwent personality changes, such as becoming braver and more outgoing, especially when facing intercultural settings. Some students like F9 in my study started to change their behaviour based on Germans' responses in intercultural settings. She stated:

"*You have to probe and see what reaction the Germans will have. Then you can set up your database as a resource for how the Germans will interact. For example, right now I am still exploring to understand their sense of humour. I sometimes try different Chinese jokes and translate to them and see what their responses will be. Sometimes I am still not sure what they will find funny*." (September 2017, third interview)

F9 also concurred: "*You have to be brave, to throw yourself into the environment. It's not always comfortable because you are not sure what their response will be. But it's worth it to try to communicate and you will understand better how it works*." (September 2017, third interview)

[482] Phillip Mar, "Accommodating Places: A Migrant Ethnography of Two Cities (Hong Kong and Sydney)" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2002).

Both these two students were not extroverted talkers, but they had changed to be more active in taking the initiative to collect, analyse, and take responsive actions to face new environments.

In addition to all the changes above that participants presented, there was another perspective worth noting: individuals' revelation of their sexual orientation and opening up to one's sexual orientation while abroad. For these participants, being in Germany meant they did not conceal their identity anymore.

7.3.2 Embracing the true self: Coming out as a gay man in Germany

Despite the growing tolerance for homosexuality in Chinese society, Chinese gay men still face many challenges because of the lack of legal, societal, and cultural supports.[483] According to Li, Chinese men experience greater family pressure to marry and have offspring with the opposite sex than their Western counterparts. As a result, most Chinese gay men are pressured to conceal their sexual orientation, and many end up marrying and having children with women.[484]

M6 came out to his best friend and flatmate as a gay man for the first time in his second year in Germany and came out to me after that. Even though we spoke Chinese with each other, he used the English word "gay" instead of the Chinese word "tongxinglian," which literally means "same sex love." This may have been because the word "gay" (*tongxinglian*) in the Chinese context is associated with many negative stereotypes and still sounds taboo.

Despite realising his sexual orientation in middle school, M3 stated that he had never dared to come out to his family and friends, or to anyone who was not also homosexual. He used an on-line dating app and had dated several gay men, but it was always underground. He stated that, when he was in China, he could only hide his true identity, and he was also thinking of marrying a female in order to keep his family happy. However, when he came to Germany, he met several

[483] Lu Tang, Cui Meadows and Hongmei Li, "How Gay Men's Wives in China Practice Co-Cultural Communication: Culture, Identity, and Sensemaking," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 13, no. 1 (2019): 13-31, doi:10.1080/17513057.2019.1569252.

[484] Li Yinghe 李银河, "Tongxinglian Ya Wenhua" 同性恋亚文化[Subculture of homosexuality], (Beijing: China Today Press, 1998).

gay friends through an online dating app, and they showed him gay bars and LGBT associations in real life for the first time. He went to gay bars with his friends and visited Gay Pride in Hamburg and Berlin in the summer of 2017.

In Germany, because of positive role models of gay man in the media, and especially with German legalisation of homosexual marriage, he felt more welcomed. "*You see the rainbow flag often*," he recalled in his memory of a Gay Pride celebration in Hamburg, the first such celebration he had attended in his whole life. "*I was so shocked and so happy. Gays were everywhere holding hands in public, hugging and kissing. I couldn't help crying, seeing so many gays together for the first time in my whole life* […] *I feel home at that moment.*" (August 2018, third interview)

He told me that he still had not revealed this "secret" to his Chinese friends, because "*I am afraid to be judged*." For him, exposure to the tolerance and celebration of gay rights helped him to reveal who he really was, and he dared to embrace his true identity. More importantly, the acceptance of who he really was also related to his feeling about Germany, a "home" for his gay identity. In a way, this personal growth provided a foundation for a sense of belonging which was manifested in his words: "*I feel I am more as a gay man than I am a Chinese.*" (July 2019, informal interview) The identity of being "gay" had become a more salient filter than being "Chinese."

7.3.3 More acceptance, celebration, and promotion of difference and diversity

The participants stated that they had become more aware of differences and did not think that their way was the only way. They became more understanding, and this offered a fresh perspective on the world. They became world citizens and started to pay attention to world knowledge. They became not only aware and accepting of difference and diversity but also celebrated and promoted them.

M9 said, "*I used to think people with tattoos and piercings were bad students in China. But after meeting some here in Germany, I found they are all nice and friendly. I am not scared or anything. That was a prejudice I had about people."* (January 2018, fourth interview)

Some participants, like F10, also developed a higher degree of intercultural sensitivity. *"Right now, I am more aware about people's differences. Because I am different from them, as a Chinese person. They respect me, and of course we should respect them too.* […] *I learnt to appreciate different lifestyles and try to integrate into my own system."* (March 2019, informal interview)

In conclusion, these changes described in this section were in line with what Bennett called "cultural sensitivity." Students started to be more sensitive about cultural similarities and differences and learnt how to cooperate with others without jumping to judgement too quickly.[485] For individuals, changes in conceptions of themselves were of greater significance than changes in cultural conceptions, possibly because the impact of discovering a new self through personal growth and its potential impact on daily life was enormous. For some participants, leaving home led to looking for a new home away from home and eventually even building a home, either physically or emotionally. The participants' experiences in Germany empowered them and helped them become experienced individuals. Studying and living abroad ultimately offers young individuals the possibility to expand their boundaries and horizons.[486]

7.4 Changes in sense of belonging

Participants' stories detailed different patterns of belonging between China and Germany and dynamic changes during their stay abroad in Germany and their homecoming in China. Accounts of belonging in the homeland and the host land showed diverse and divergent "national" orientations. The process of change was also shown.

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[485] Milton J Bennett, "Towards a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity," in *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, ed. R. Michael Paige (Yarmouth, Intercultural Press:1993).

[486] Lorraine Brown, "The Transformative Power of The International Sojourn: An Ethnographic Study of the International Student Experience," *Annals of Tourism Research* 36, no. 3 (2009): 502-521, doi:10.1016/j.annals.2009.03.002.

7.4.1 Prominence of identity as a student in Germany

Many participants were self-conscious and deliberate about employing the concept of international students or *liuxuesheng* (留学生) in their talk and actions. Many participants were most comfortable associating themselves with "international students" in Germany: they were not exchange students who did not have to be independent, stayed temporarily, and were tourists who did not know much about the local culture and language, but they also were not the older Chinese immigrants whom they assumed worked in Chinese restaurants all day long. This "elite" sense was well established among them. "Students" refers to people who are young, have potential, and are flexible. Some of the participants felt that being a student was not the same as working as an immigrant in Germany, as a worker might be considered to be "stealing" a job from Germans in Germany; a student was someone who came for study, and someone who would go back to their original country with the knowledge they learnt in Germany. In other words, as international students, the participants' identity transcended national boundaries. Moreover, the exchange networks and relationships formed between international students from different countries and cultures provided the participants with a new and broader transnational frame of reference and identity, as well as a sense of belonging to a transnational community outside of China - the community of Chinese students overseas or the community of international students. As students, they were somewhere between the Chinese diaspora and the Chinese in China. An in-between yet undecided ambivalence contributed to a sense of belonging for these young Chinese students.

A sense of belonging emerged during a negotiation between "sameness" and "difference." Being students helped some participants blur the boundaries, to some extent, between Chinese and non-Chinese. It helped find to find a sense of "sameness" in Germany. An identity as a student offered a sense of belonging, but at the same time was hampered by the identity of being a Chinese person, which was read as being "different". Therefore, some participants tried their best to emphasise their student identity in Germany. For example, M9's favorite identification card was his German university student card. This student card did not indicate nationality and it was the same as any other student's card, unlike his Chinese passport indicating his "Chinese nationality" or his temporary residence permit or Aufenthaltstitel from the German Ausländerbehörde, which needed to be regularly extended, both constant reminders him of his "otherness" and foreign status compared to the locals in Germany.

Therefore, when M9 was asked to present his identification card, he would usually try his student card first, instead of presenting his Chinese passport or German temporary residence permit, even though these two were the most widely acceptable for identification. To some extent, M9's student card become a tangible resource for his identification in Germany. M9 commented on his understanding of the difference:

"*The student card is the identification that says I know much about Germany. I feel I could be somehow part of this society and know its rules well enough, not like I am a tourist and know nothing about the country and don't care about anything* [...] *Chinese passports and German Aufenthaltstitel are just another proof of being a foreigner in Germany.*" (December 2017, third interview)

7.4.2 From *guests* to *hosts*: Establishing a local sense of belonging and place attachment

To experience a sense of belonging, one needs to reclaim power in the "host-guest" paradigm. To some extent, a sense of belonging implies a sense of emotional ownership as a "host." To belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of that community, whereas a "guest" is someone in a more passive position.

From an etymological point of view, the Chinese word for "host" is *zhu* (主), which implies dominance and "a superior position and decisive power in certain relation paradigms," [487] as in *zhuren* 主人 (host), *zhudong* 主动 (active), and *zhuyao* 主要 (primary). On the other hand, *ke* refers to a visitor or guest, as in *keren* 客人(guest) and *lüke* 旅客 (traveller). In the Chinese context, being a guest implies "being controlled, dominated or governed." [488] One needs to follow what the host has arranged, as shown in the Chinese phrase *ke sui zhu bian* (客随主便), which literally means that guests should suit the convenience of the hosts.

The question my participants were asked most often at the beginning of their stay in Germany

[487]Xiaoqing Chen, "Multidimensional Study of Hospitality and the Host-Guest Paradigm in China," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 30, no. 1 (2018): 495-513, doi:10.1108/ijchm-09-2016-0509.

[488] Ibid.

was “Where are you from?”, especially when they were socialising with new people in Germany. This was also the moment when they were confronted with direct questions of their sense of belonging.

Although “Where are you from?” seems a very simple and obvious question, it also shows an asymmetry of power, and it was a question that sometimes was used to demarcate the line between “hosts” and “guests,” or “us” and “them,” even though both parties did not realise this. Furthermore, “Where are you from?” implies a tone of exclusion. As Visweswaran argued, “The question ‘where are you from?’ is never an innocent one, yet not all subjects have equal difficulty answering”[489] because it might imply another question: Why are you different? Ang also argued that this question continues to mark one’s identity to place, which positions the person who has been asked as the *Other*.[490] This question might confirm the “hegemony of nationality as a key marker of cultural origin and belonging” and also prove that the nation-state is still a powerful presence.[491] Also, although this question might allow Germans counterparts to locate an international student’s home country, it does not fully encompass the identity of the student.[492]

In the interviews with my participants, many articulated a feeling that they had been asked questions like this too often, and they felt even sometimes like an “unwanted” or “unwelcome” guest in Germany. My participants observed that the answer to the question normally did not go beyond “I am from China.” The participants’ identity was reduced to “Chinese” and was reinforced every time they met new people. Many participants made a clear distinction between “Chinese” and “non-Chinese” in our interviews. They usually called Germans *laowai* (老外) in Chinese, which literally means “old foreigners,” although these students themselves were “foreign” to Germany. They commented:

“*I feel like a guest here. Ke ju ci di* (客居此地).”

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[489] Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 115.
[490] Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 200.
[491] Andrea Louie, *Chineseness across Borders* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
[492] Chris Glass, “Peer Review International Students’ Sense of Belonging—Locality, Relationships, and Power,” *Peer Review* 20, no. 1 (2018), https://www.aacu.org/peerreview/2018/Winter/Glass, accessed November 20, 2018.

"*When you are in China, it's like that's the territory under your control, but when you are in Germany, overseas, that's like you are in others' territory. You are just a guest (yixiangke* 异乡客*)."* (June 2014, first interview)

Yixiangke literally means "different hometown guest," or a guest from a foreign land. This word emphasises a strong sense of non-belonging as a *stranger*. This feeling of dislocation was reflected in the participants' sense of (non-) belonging and was expressed through the phrase "独在异乡为异客, 每逢佳节倍思亲" or "Alone, a lonely stranger in a foreign land," which is a well-known line in a poem from Wang Wei (?-761) of the Tang Dynasty.[493]

At the beginning of the study, many interviewed students tended to regard themselves as "guests" in Germany. As a "polite" guest, one is expected to "follow whatever the host has arranged at his/her convenience", or in Chinese "*ke sui zhu bian*" (客随主便), as mentioned above. As a host, the quality of "warm hospitality" or "*reqing haoke*" (热情好客) is highly expected in China. Therefore, the Chinese participants in this study normally expected that it was mainly incumbent upon the local German students to initiate friendships, as a sign of hospitality. Many of the interviewed Chinese students expected to "follow" local students' arrangements, and thus they were waiting for their German counterparts to reach out to them.

However, they slowly realized that this was not working well. In the follow-up interviews, a recurrent Chinese word among some participants was "*fan ke wei zhu*" (反客为主). This means "from the guest to the host", or "the guest replaces the host." It signifies the guest obtaining the initiative and reversing the roles of host and guest. These participants had realised that they were the protagonists of their own lives in Germany and should take some initiative, instead of just treating themselves as "guests" and waiting for an invitation from Germans, whom they had previously regarded as "hosts." For example, in the second year, F8 signed up to be a member of the orientation team that offered suggestions and guidance to new students. Being "an old-timer" gave her confidence; she did not consider herself a "guest" anymore, at least at the university setting.

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[493] Translated by Yuanchong Xu.

I noticed that one of the transformations that occurred in the Chinese participants was their reconceptualization of what it is to be a local or a host. Rather than confining their understanding within the container of the nation-state, some of the participants started to regard themselves as locals in their town, to some extent, after three or four years of living in the same city. Through this process, these participants obtained a sense of belonging to the locality, if not necessarily to Germany as a whole.

"*I am not a local in terms of Germany, but I am a local now in this city, and in this street. I am very familiar with most shops here now.*" (March 2018, third interview)

F10 also felt this difference in her sense of belonging between the national macro level and the local level.[494] As F10 explained, giving directions to strangers provided her a sense of belonging to the city where she lived.

"*Strangers ask me how to use the library on campus and they ask me about directions when I walk on the street. It feels very satisfying. I have my favourite cafe shop and my favourite restaurant here in town. I also know who is friendly and who is not*." (April 2019, informal interview)

This local identity also helped participants to access a stronger sense of belonging and helped students to feel more accepted by the host environment.

M7 felt that his current domicile in his city in Germany offered him a sense of belonging. He said, "*When I fill in the forms, I always have to write down my address. It's my address in this city.*" Also, helping a neighbour could offer a sense of emotional ownership. F5 helped organize her neighbourhood barbecue every summer, and she felt at home in her neighbourhood. This "ownership" of the local community provided her with a sense of belonging. Some participants had become better connected individuals on a local level, if not on a national or regional level. Local belonging to the daily life of a neighbourhood in a habituated place is very different from belonging to the German national community. The students seemed to have developed a higher degree of local attachment to the neighbourhood more easily.

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[494] Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Jensen, "Roots and Routes," *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 1, no. 3 (2011), doi:10.2478/v10202-011-0013-1.

In other words, they became agents of ownership. At this time, I noticed a change in F8 in her third year when she was meeting new people at a get-together on campus. She started to initiate the questions "*Where are you from?*" or "*Which city are you from?*" as an ice breaker for small talk, instead of being asked to introduce her hometown. She started to feel sort of like a "host" or "local" after living for several years in Germany. Thus, she felt empowered by taking the initiative to ask where others came from, for example.

Some participants learnt to feel empowered through engaging in their local community, instead of being "guests" or "tourists" in German society. Once participants started to ponder the question of how they could contribute to their community, there was a potential that they would act as creators of the community. This required participants to believe that it was possible for the organization, neighbourhood, or community in question to be their own.[495] Some shifted their conception of ownership to the position that, in some activities, each participant creates the current conditions. In other words, "to belong is to be an investor, owner and creator of the place."[496]

On the other hand, many participants realised that they had the power to create a space for themselves. They were not confined to geographical locations, and the embodiment of "place", when creating a feeling of "home." Many participants, like F2 and F9, brought certain types of food back to Germany after visiting their parents in China, such as different spices and Chinese snacks, even though these could be found in the Asian markets in Germany. However, these behaviours were not only about material attachment, but also symbolic attachment to China, and more specifically, to one's original home. These practices allowed participants to create a home for themselves in Germany while maintaining and continuing their "identity" as a Chinese person.

7.4.3 "I am from Germany": Emotional attachment to Germany

Some participants started to share an emotional attachment to Germany in various settings, for example, when students were travelling outside of Germany. F4 shared such an experience:

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[495] Peter Block, *Civic Engagement and the Restoration of Community*, eBook, 1st ed., 2007.

[496] Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco, Calif.: Berrett-Koehler, 2009).

"*When I was traveling in Austria, the locals there said that I had a northern German accent and I felt like I am from Germany.*" (August 2019, fourth interview) "*Every time when I travel back from other European countries, I feel back home in Germany.*" (Informal interview, August 2018)

A second example of this emerging emotional attachment was during international football matches, specifically UEFA Euro 2016[497] and FIFA World Cup in 2018. Many participants rooted for Germany. M2 learnt to sing "Schlaaand, Schlaaand, Schlaaand" with strangers in the sports pub, to show solidarity with Germans. As M15 mentioned: "*You can just high-five everyone in the club. The atmosphere was just amazing! We were all supporting German team there.*" (July 2016, informal interview)

Football games seem to have bridged the gap temporarily between Chinese students as "outsiders" or guests and Germany. One thing was very interesting: half of my participants admitted that they had never watched football games and had never been interested in the sport at all, but since they were in Germany and during the two football tournaments mentioned above, the majority of them were at least emotionally involved in supporting the German national team and many participants updated their feelings on WeChat. F9 wrote: "*I love my Germany! Go Germany!!!You are the best!*" This may not be an "enduring" sense of belonging, but these WeChat updates displayed a clear affinity for the German national team, which was a symbol for Germany. The participants also wanted to prove that they seemed to have been accepted by the host country via passionate declaration in sport. Since China was not participating in the UEFA Euro nor in the final of the World Cup, it was not an acid test of the students' belonging to China or Germany. There was no need to choose between the Chinese and German teams.

A third example is that many of my participants wanted to distinguish themselves from Chinese students who study in other countries, especially in the UK and USA. F4 said: "*They don't have to learn another foreign language, but we have to learn German, so it's much harder for us. We will have two languages skills when we graduate.*" M2 also commented on the differences: "*Students who go to the USA or UK may come from a richer family, but their study program is easier, especially in the UK. They just need one year for a master's program.*

[497] UEFA European Football Championship, commonly referred to as UEFA Euro 2016.

Everyone knows that the German education system is more serious. They can afford expensive luxury goods while studying abroad, but we are more hard-working, rigorous, efficient, and punctual because we have the German quality." (April 2016, second interview)

7.4.4 Belonging as a sense of in-betweenness

If transnationals are understood as those "whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders,"[498] then the experience of Chinese students in Germany appeared to centre on transnationality. This durability of affiliation also existed in F4's trivial daily life: "*I always have two time zones on my cell phone and two weather reports on my cell phone, so I can check the time and the weather in my hometown whenever I check the time and the weather here in Germany*" (May 2018, informal interview).

Some participants, like F4, developed a sense of simultaneous multi-locality, especially with the help of modern communication technology. Participants could video call their family and friends back in China and in other parts of the world. Many students also used social networking sites as tools to stay connected across space.[499]

While some students had established a sense of belonging in different places, there were also confusions. Some students in the study experienced a sense of in-betweenness when they examined their own feelings. Even though some of the students were able to acquire a valuable sense of multicultural community, some other students realised that, while living in a transnational social space, they were uncertain about where they truly belonged and where "home" was.

For example, F6 explained to me in her last interview upon her graduation: "*Every time when I went back to China and visited, I felt like this was not my world anymore. I stayed with my parents and all my friends from school and university were working somewhere. So, I had to stay home, and I felt so bored and I didn't have a life there. My parents went to work during the day and all my friends had either moved to other cities or they stayed in my hometown, but*

[498] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton Blanc, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48, doi:10.2307/3317464.
[499] Nishmin Balsara Kashyap, "Graduate international students' social experiences examined through their transient lives," *College and University* 87, no.1 (2011), 18-27.

they still needed to work. I was so bored after a few days staying at my parents' home. I started to miss my flat in Germany. But I was so frustrated because I knew I was missing home so much when I am here [in Germany]." (November 2017, third interview)

"*I didn't know how to use WeChat to pay the bill when I went back to China. You know, people thought I must be crazy, since everyone in China was using a cell phone to pay without cash at all. There were lots of new things coming up in China and I felt like I am outdated by my own home country already."* (November 2017, informal interview)

F7 was a bit different from other participants because she went through a process of immigrating to Germany through marriage during our interviews, and she had gone through a long process of reflecting deeply on what it means to "become German." At first, she did not want to be naturalised into Germany at all, and she kept her Chinese passport. She went home for a Chinese New Year and for the first time she clearly felt "non-belonging" to China, so when she went back to Germany, she started the process of immigration. F7 was the only one in my research who changed her passport during her last year of study through marriage to a German citizen. She found it difficult to say, "I am German." She had to justify herself and introduced herself as a "German citizen only by citizenship." She said that she felt caught in the middle, neither Chinese nor German, and she was struggling since she felt no place was "home."

In conclusion, the participants in this study experienced changes in the daily negotiation of their relationships with significant others both in Germany and in China, and in the tension between alienation/freedom and belonging.[500] One's sense of belonging can be malleable depending on how one adjusts to a different culture. For the participants, this process was one of navigating their identity as Chinese students in Germany. Agreeing with Levitt and Schiller, I would like to underscore that belonging is not an either-or-attachment that one must declare. Rather, it seems that some transnational individuals are capable of dealing with a dual or multifaceted sense of belonging and incorporating both nascent and past attachments to place with transnational connections.[501] Belonging is also a core part of multiple and transnational

[500] Helen Hayes, "(Be)Coming Home: an Existential Perspective on Migration, Settlement and the Meanings of Home,"*Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis*, 18, no. 1 (2007): 15.

[501] Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society," *The International Migration Review* 38, no. 3 (2004): 1002-039.

identities. These identities can be seen as an opportunity to be rooted in multiple places, take different positions, and build a sense of belonging to different places.[502]

This sense of in-betweenness was also embodied by some participants who not only experienced themselves as moving from China to Germany, but also encountered a sense of simultaneous presence in multiple spaces that transcended national categories. In other words, these students were not only adjusting their lives to Germany itself, but also to a more complex and ambiguous identity across cultural and national borders. These spaces were thus sites where these Chinese students investigated the meaning of their own multiplicity and in-betweenness.[503]

Building on Ang's description of "in-betweenness," I noted that, although my participants were embedded in an essentialized framework of Chinese identity mainly constructed by the state, while studying abroad and being able to explore themselves in Germany, some of them wanted to or were able to distance themselves from this identity to some extent and discover other potential frameworks. In line with Ang, I believe that this hybrid in-betweenness is inspiring, not because it represents an easy and convenient stand, but because of its "ambivalence" which is a source of "cultural permeability and vulnerability that is a necessary condition for living together in difference" and "a process of boundary-blurring transculturation."[504]

7.5 Changing perceptions of Germans and Germany

7.5.1 Changing perceptions of Germany

Fuelled by the wide-reaching consumerism and wealth that followed China's reform and opening up, today's urban youth in China enjoy more material comforts than their parents who experienced the "hard and simple" life (*jianku pusu* 艰苦朴素) of Mao's era. For example, with the digital development of commercial business, anything can be purchased through the internet and China's fast shipping and digital pay made urban life even more comfortable and

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[502]Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Jensen, "Roots and Routes," *Nordic Journal of Migration Research,* 1, no. 3 (2011), doi:10.2478/v10202-011-0013-1.

[503] Beate Mariam Killguss, "Identity and the Need to Belong: Understanding Identity Formation and Place in the Lives of Global Nomads," *Illness, Crisis & Loss* 16, no. 2 (2008):137-151.

[504] Ien Ang, "Together-In-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, Into Hybridity," *Asian Studies Review* 27, no. 2 (2003): 150, doi:10.1080/10357820308713372.

convenient.[505] In other words, Chinese urban youth today is at the centre of material comfort and consumerism. Compared to previous generations and rural youth, they enjoy superior socio-economic and cultural conditions and are expected to have better life opportunities. Therefore, to some extent, material foundations also lead young people to associate modernity with consumerism. When the students in this study came to Germany, they found out that the lifestyles in a "developed" Western country were not exactly the same as they had expected. Staying in Germany forced the students to reconsider the way in which they had conceived and recognized modernity while being "drenched" in the Chinese urban lifestyle.

For example, F2 found that the second-hand market is quite large in Germany. "*I was so surprised that my classmates are actually buying second-hand clothes!*" In China, second-hand consumption was associated with shame and stigma, tut it became "cool" and "stylish" in Germany.[506] By contrast, Germany became associated with friendly and idyllic "rural" features that were apparently lost in the current Chinese metropolises. The Chinese students' imaginings of Germany as an efficient, urban, developed industrialized world in the West were replaced with an understanding of Germany as a place where people are in harmony with nature. This provided another image of the Chinese sense of place. Compared to high buildings in metropolises such as Beijing and Shanghai in China, the normal size of German cities is not that impressive anymore to the young Chinese. Some of the participants were more impressed by the convenience of the infrastructure, such as the way blind people can walk by themselves in town, how buses allow seniors in wheelchair, and how students with babies are supported by the university. They said:

"*In China, I never see a blind person walking on the street alone.*" (June 2016, informal interview)

"*In the university library, there are rooms for kids and babies*, *so it's convenient for the mother and father to take care of their kids while studying! That's just not imaginable in my Chinese university.*" (October 2015, second interview)

[505] Fengshu Liu, *Urban Youth in China*, 1st ed. (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 58.
[506] Adrian, Franklin, "The Ethics of Second Hand Consumption," in *Ethical Consumption: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Tania Lewis and Emily Potter (London, Routledge: 2011),156.

Many participants called Germany a village ("*decun*", which literally means "German village"). They named the city they lived in with the suffix "*cun*" which means "village" in Chinese. Therefore, the perception of Germany as a country full of skyscrapers that was held by many participants before they came to Germany had been fully changed. Students found themselves more deeply impressed by the scenery of a rainbow or a sunset, and the landscape and the forest in Germany.

However, this image of Germany's pleasant natural landscape did not help the students gain a sense of belonging in Germany. Instead, it reminded these participants about how they missed the lively environment back in China, despite its negative side. There is a famous saying that circulates among Chinese students studying overseas: "国外好山好水好无聊，国内好脏好乱好热闹." It literally means "Outside of the country there is good landscape, but it's so boring, whereas inside the country, it's so dirty so messy but so lively." This saying was also recurrent in the interviews with several participants. They missed the liveliness and concentration of urban life in China.

For example, M9 and M6 were participants who did not feel a sense of belonging in Germany at all even upon their graduation, and sometimes this non-belonging was manifested through complaining about the "inconvenience" of the host country:

"*I cannot find a proper shopping mall in town here in Germany. It's so disappointing, you know. People are dressed so out-of-date. Always grey and dark. It's not fashionable at all."* (March 2018, informal interview)

"*Everything is closed on Sunday! It's really hard for me to explain to my parents that I have to shop on Saturday otherwise I might be starved.* […] *Deutsche Bahn is so always delayed.*" (October 2014, first interview)

7.5.2 Changing perceptions of Germans

There is a stereotype that Chinese students are normally socially isolated from locals abroad and many of them just insulate themselves in a distinctive Chinese community. However, my

observations told a more complicated story. For some of my participants, their very first perceptions of German contacts were rather "disappointing."

During my first-round interviews, one adjective appeared repeatedly to describe how the participants felt about their German classmates. This word was "*gaoleng*," (高冷) which literally means "*high cold*" in Chinese. It is an abbreviation of "*gaogui lengyan*" or 高贵冷艳. 高 refers to 高贵, which means noble, whereas 冷 refers to 冷艳, which can be interpreted as beautiful but hard to approach. It is a very popular cyber buzzword among young Chinese[507] that is normally used to describe someone, sometimes an idol, who is beautiful but arrogant and sometimes supercilious.[508] This word cannot be translated directly into English easily, because it contains a subtle double meaning. On the one hand, this word appreciates the special beauty of a person, but on the other hand, it criticizes his or her aloof manner. Many Chinese students complained about their first impression of German classmates or colleagues. As M2 said:

"*No one came and talked to me. I guess they just didn't care.*" (December 2014, first interview)

M8 also explained: "*They seem very nice and polite to you, but you cannot get close to them and you will never enter their circles either. You know they are just very* ***gaoleng***." (March 2017, informal interview)

"*I will give you an example of* ***gaoleng****. There is one German classmate who has been sitting beside me for a whole week now, but he has never smiled at me or greeted me, unless I say hi to him first.*" (April 2015, second interview)

What these two students touched on reflects a very essential aspect of the reality of the Chinese participants' social life with Germans. On the one hand, these Chinese students were hoping to be able to interact with their German acquaintances and develop friendships; on the other hand, they started to feel that their acquaintances were not very easy to approach. Contacts did not come easily, and as foreigners, they felt that they had to impress their interlocutors in those

[507] "Gaoleng,," Baidu Baike, accessed 13 May 2020, https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%AB%98%E5%86%B7/15453217.
[508] Ibid.

conversations. On the other hand, the word "*gaoleng*" seems to show that these Chinese students looked up to their German counterparts and use them as benchmarks. For example, academic success was to be judged not against the students' co-nationals but in relation to German students. Many Chinese students felt "ignored" in the classroom yet dared not to voice their disappointment or did not know how to handle it.

Of course, the other German students were also in their first semester, and it was also a new environment for them. It was possible that the German students were also looking for help. Therefore, it might not have been true that they "ignored" Chinese international students on purpose. On the other hand, the feeling of being "ignored" was valid for the Chinese students, since it was the subjective feeling they had, and therefore I count it as reality too.

For example, M9 stated: "*I was the only Chinese student or foreign student in that class. The first class I didn't understand a bit. I was totally lost, but no one came and asked me if I could understand.*" (May 2015, informal interview)

The identity of being a guest was prominent in this Chinese student. He was expecting someone who could come and offer help. Some students believed their status as "foreigners" equated with being guests who should obtain extra attention or, more specifically, more care from local students on campus. M11 compared his situation to the environment in his university back in China.

"*When I was in my university, foreign students always obtained much focus and Chinese students always surrounded them. They were like superstars. I don't mean that I have been treated as a star, but I really feel like no one pays attention at all. They are not like Chinese, and they are not hospitable*." (June 2017, second interview)

As one can see, M11 called the university he attended in China "my university," which reflected his attitude of not feeling that he belonged at his new university in Germany, even though he was officially enrolled there as a student.

These experiences could partially be due to differences in the education systems of China and Germany. In the Chinese education system, students in university are still organized by class. Even though there is more flexibility compared with middle school, the university normally

arranges for students in the same class to stay in the same dormitory room or same building and take the same compulsory courses. Therefore, being a member of a class is important, and the relationship between classmates is supposed to be tighter and closer. The concept of classmates in Chinese can be called *tongchuang* (同窗), which literally means "identical window" or *tongxue* (同学) which literally means "identical study." These terms also contain a deeper meaning of friendship than in English or German.

In Chinese universities, at the faculty level, there is a "counselor" (*fudaoyuan* 辅导员). He or she is responsible for the studies and daily life of students; among the students, there is a "class president" (*banzhan* 班长) and a committee that takes care of their fellow students (*banji* 班级). They organize activities for the class. As a result, there is a high frequency of contact with other students. In Germany, however, classmates or Kommilitonen at the university are not necessarily friends, even though friendship may grow later. When the students in my study first entered the German higher education system, they found out that the university was not organised as it was in China. Although students had more flexibility and freedom to choose courses and activities, the differences could still lead to uncomfortable and even challenging social experiences for new Chinese students. These experiences resulted in the impression that "*nobody takes care of me*" and that Germans have "*insufficient personal interest in others*."

However, in the later interviews, some participants started to change their perceptions in this respect. Another word recurrent in my later interviews with participants was the new word "*mensao*" (闷骚). It refers to people who are outwardly cold or retiring but deep and passionate inside. Compared to the other buzzword "*gaoleng*" (高冷), which was quite often used in the earlier interviews, these participants seemed to have discovered other layers in their German counterparts' characters. They seem to understand people better, and they have found that Germans were possible to approach. One participant said,

"*Well, they are **mensao**. You have to approach them actively. Once you are in the circle, they are very cool and welcoming. They are not as cold as they seem to be*." (May 2019, fourth interview)

In conclusion, some participants changed their earlier imaginings and perceptions about Germans and Germany. They realised that people are friendly if one opens up, but it does take

some time. Their stereotypes about Germans had also been deconstructed to some extent. On the other hand, some participants had also started to rethink their conception of modernity, resulting in disappointment about the development of German urban life compared to the rapid development of Chinese big cities.

7.6 Development of an understanding of "Chineseness"

7.6.1 Ethnical understanding of "Chineseness"

Firstly, many participants believed that being Chinese was a stable ethnical identity involving skin colour, facial traits, and blood relationships, and as such their attachment to Chineseness was not deformable.

M10 said, "*I will never ever be a German because of the way I look. Our Chinese faces will make us be foreigners forever, no matter how well you speak German and how long you live in Germany*" (August 2016, third interview). F4 similarly described, "*You are Chinese, and every minute when I am here, I get looks from people, or at least I feel so. I have some other classmates who are from the USA or Europe, but they are white. They can be similar to Germans but not us"* (September 2018, fourth interview). Here, Chineseness was seen as an "inescapable reality" that Chinese students had to face in their daily lives. Their "Chinese" face was considered a source of "objectivity, expectation and constraint," excluding its bearers from being accepted or "passing" in German society in the same way as "white" international students from other European countries.[509]

F2 believed that Chinese students or international students were reduced to their racial presentation on campus. Many students had to learn to deal with the rhetoric of the "internationalism" of the university. For example, the cover of the university's guide for international students contained a picture of six students. The one in the middle was a Chinese student who happened to be one of my interviewees. She believed that she was chosen because of her "Chinese face":

[509] Lucille Lok-Sun Ngan and Chan Kwok-bun, "Authenticity and Physicality: Chineseness in Cultural and Racial Discourses", in *The Chinese Face in Australia* (New York: Springer, 2012).

"*I don't know what to say, but I really feel they put me in the photo not because of who I am as a person, but because of my Chinese face.*" (June 2015, informal interview)

Since all of the participants were from Han ethnic group, which was the majority ethnic group in China, being "Chinese" seems to be taken for granted by them. As "Han Chinese," the students participating in my study were the majority in the Chinese society and may never feel as if they lived as ethnic minorities in China.[510] However, after coming to Germany, many participants started to reflect on their understanding of their own Chineseness, especially in the predominantly white German society, Chinese students often felt that they were treated differently by Germans because of their ethnic identity. In other words, the Chinese ethnic identity remained one of the indelible attributes that defined and preserved the Chinese students' identity in everyday life in Germany.

Furthermore, encounters with "Chinese" ethnic minorities overseas made some participants reflect on the making of a Chinese identity. Under the Patriotic Education campaign, students were taught that, within the borders of China, all fifty-six official "nationalities" belong to the Chinese people or as "*Zhonghua minzu*." However, in Germany, some participants in my study began to gain a more complicated understanding of the Chinese nation after encountering other ethnic groups from China in Germany, e.g., Tibetan and Uyghur immigrants. There was a perceptual distinction between ethnic minorities residing within China and those living abroad. This led to, for example, an ambiguous understanding of the Chinese nation or *Zhonghua minzu* for F10. F10 was firstly rather confused about how to identify her encounter with a Tibetan second-generation refugee, Tenzin,[511] who studied at the same university in Germany. Tenzin was from India and wanted to live in Tibet after her university studies in Germany and was also learning Chinese. However, from what F10 had learnt from the Chinese official narrative, Tibetan people are an inseparable part of the fifty-six ethnic groups of the Chinese nation or *Zhonghua minzu,* and they should be regarded as "Chinese" too. F10 said, "*I performed a Tibetan dance at a Chinese Cultural evening as a part of Chinese culture.*" For her, the question of whether to identify Tenzin as Chinese became problematic, as it would contradict what she

[510] Frank Dikötter argued that the unique development of the concept of race in Chinese society is very much in need of contextualization. See Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1992).
[511] Pseudonym.

was taught in China. In that brief disorienting moment, F10 could not place the Chinese identity onto Tenzin.

While political discussions of the complex relationship between the Tibetan and the Beijing government are beyond the scope of this study, these unstable and politically sensitive issues tended to deconstruct the standard understanding of Chineseness that some students had acquired in China and prompted them to interrogate that understanding when they encountered inconsistent interpretations of the issue abroad.[512]

7.6.2 Political understanding of "Chineseness"

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, some participants developed a strong political loyalty toward a Chinese identity. This was also manifested during the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in Europe in 2020, when Chinese students received masks from the Chinese embassy. Many of the participants who were still in Germany received them with full gratitude. F2 updated on WeChat: "*I am so grateful that the Chinese government didn't forget us Chinese students abroad at this special moment. It's such a blessing to be a Chinese citizen*." M4 updated: "*The Chinese government is the best in the world, and only they can protect us as children of China.*"

For some participants, being Chinese abroad also was equated to subscribing and supporting the ideology of the CCP, especially when they encountered different voices in Germany. M6 explained how shocked and disgusted he felt when he saw banners reading "天要灭中共" (God wants to destroy the CCP) and "退党保平安" (Quit the CCP to stay safe) displayed by *Falungong* supporters in bigger cities like Frankfurt and Berlin in Germany.[513] He said, in a tone of confusion that made evident that his feelings were hurt by the sign: "*[Falun Gong] is a disgrace to China. I just cannot believe there are people still buying this shit here in Germany. It's so shameful that they do it in front of Germans* [...] *and why do Germans allow them to do it anyway?*" (May 2015, informal interview).

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[512] Chris Vasantkumar, "What is This 'Chinese' in Overseas Chinese? Sojourn Work and the Place of China's Minority Nationalities in Extraterritorial Chinese-ness," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 2 (2012): 441.

[513] *Falun Gong* as a new religious movement, was founded in 1992 by Hongzhi Li and later was defined as a cult by the Chinese government. For more information about *Falungong* movement and its controversies, see Liang Zheng, "'We Are More Chinese Than You'," *Journal of International Communication* 17, no. 2 (2011): 163-177, doi:10.1080/13216597.2011.589367.

Many of the participants shared a sense of pride and a sense of responsibility to uphold national politics. As M3 explained, "*If someone believes that Taiwan or Hong Kong is not part of China, then we don't assume he/she should be Chinese, because true Chinese will agree to this and support the policy of their government*" (August 2017, informal interview). "Chineseness" in the eyes of these participants seemed to be awarded only to those who acted like "true Chinese" in defending their country's government. Criticism of the Chinese government's policies could lead to disidentification with other Chinese communities, leading to exclusion. These political positions were the stages in which "Chineseness" was experienced and embodied, directly or indirectly.[514]

7.6.3 Cultural understanding of "Chineseness"

Firstly, in my interviews, I found that many students emphasised the importance of cultural connections and cohesion to the construction of Chineseness. M9 illustrated his wish to dissociate himself from an imposed Chinese "identity" politically, as *Zhongguoren* (中国人), but he self-consciously labeled himself *Huaren* (华人), or specifically *Liudehua* (留德华), which literally means "Chinese who stayed in Germany." He was referring to *Huaren* as "people of Chinese origin" or more specifically "people of *Han* origin," whereas he used *Zhongguoren* to mean "people who hold a passport from the state of the People's Republic of China". While *Huaren* is not restricted by geography but instead invokes "a common ancestry and a shared cultural background," "*Zhongguoren*" by contrast "necessarily evokes obligations and loyalties of political affiliation".[515]

However, although many students described that they had become more interested in Chinese culture, some students at the beginning of the study were normally very excited about the opportunity to present their home culture but later expressed their dissatisfaction with it when they had spent a longer time in Germany. M14 explained:

"*I will stop going to these activities and programs. They are for new students, not for me anymore. It's always the same thing. Chinese culture is always called calligraphy or Taiji. It*

[514] Hsin-I Cheng, "In the Eyes of the Chinese: Affective Construction of Cultural Identity," *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 35 (2014).
[515] Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Centre," *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (1991): 1-32.

becomes boring to me now. The conversation with others is always the same. Other cultures' programs are always the typical thing. I am bored with it." (October 2018, third interview)

F5 had participated in the organisation of a Chinese cultural evening, and she was one of the presenters. Since she had never ever really been in a position to introduce Chinese culture in front of an international crowd, she admitted that she had to "study" what should be introduced in order to attract an international audience. "*I don't know what I should introduce to them so I went to Wikipedia in English first to see what the Westerners would introduce us to*." F5 wanted to present something modern such as Chinese pop music and modern films, but the idea was rejected by the co-organizers because it was "too modern to be Chinese," and they felt that this would not represent interesting cultural difference. Finally, they decided on the following program for the Chinese cultural evening:

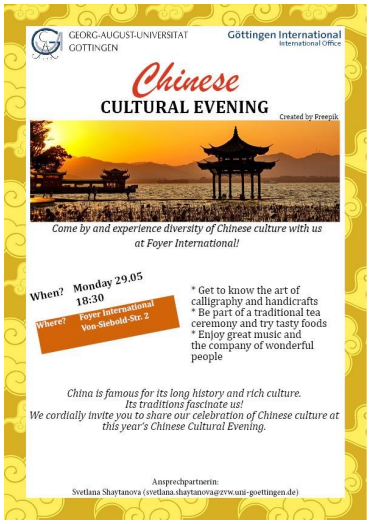

Figure 3. Poster for the Chinese cultural evening (Source: International Office of the university on its official Facebook page)

The program included a presentation on calligraphy, tourist attractions such as Xi'an with its "Terracotta Warriors," and a Chinese traditional tea ceremony (even though the performer herself did not know how to do such a ceremony until she looked it up on YouTube and learn it there before the cultural evening).These activities presented Chinese culture mostly as something "other" to the West, but these "colourful" and othered presentations could not contribute to real understanding of diversity.

Secondly, gradually developing contact with other Chinese people from places other than the mainland China, such as Taiwan, Singapore, Hongkong, Malaysia, and Indonesia, also helped some participants to redefine what "Chineseness" is. Meeting people who were born or raised in Germany or who had one parent who was non- Chinese also helped redefine their understanding of Chineseness. Some of the participants found that, most of the time, these other kinds of people lacked the authority to be Chinese because they lacked Chinese language skills, or to be more precise, Mandarin (although some of the German-born children spoke a dialect but could not read or write in Chinese). Some participants regarded themselves as more fully Chinese compared with these other people. In M9's eyes, people of Chinese origin who did not speak Chinese fluently or added German words indicated that they had already discarded or forsaken their Chineseness and become extensively Westernized. He said, "*They are bananas, you know. They are yellow outside, but white inside* [...] *I don't plan to live in Germany forever, because I want my future kids to grow up in China. Otherwise, they will not speak good Chinese, nor understand the culture, like those bananas*." (March 2019, fourth interview)

These propositions tended to have binary oppositions of authentic and inauthentic, real and unreal, pure and impure.[516] Many participants used to assume that there was only one standard of Chineseness, which was that of Mainland China. However, after meeting different people from greater China, they started to accept different notions of "being Chinese." As M8 noted: "*I think they are also Chinese, because Chinese culture is so deep and various*." (March 2019, informal interview)

7.7 Changes in decisions to stay or to leave

As time went, I was excited to find that some of the participants in this study had changed their decision about the duration of their stay in Germany upon graduation. There were mainly three changes kinds of changes in the study regarding these decisions.

M10's original plan was to finish his master's study within two or three years, see if he could

[516] Lucille Lok-Sun Ngan and Chan Kwok-bun, "Authenticity and Physicality: Chineseness in Cultural and Racial Discourses," in *The Chinese Face in Australia* (New York: Springer, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2131-3_5.

find a job in Germany, and work for a few years to gain work experience before going back to China. However, in his third year, his father was injured in an accident. In order to take care of his father, he took a semester off and went back to China. After his father recovered, he never went back to Germany for his last semester. He decided to find a job in China instead and ended up teaching German. He was very happy to share his experience in Germany and his way of learning German with his students. When asked about why he decided to drop out of his master's study in Germany, he stated: "*I found it really boring, the study. The Germans are dull. I missed life back in China. It's so lonely there. China is developing so fast and there are so many opportunities here. I don't need the degree anymore"* (September 2018, third interview). It was interesting to see that M10's work was to teach students who wanted to go to Germany to study and to prepare them for their German language exams. On his working profile on the website of the language school, he was presented as a successful example of studying in Germany, and there was a picture of him standing in the middle of the Marienplatz in Munich. The last sentence of his introduction read: "Studying in my class, it's just like enjoying a feast of culture that leads you to master the language without realising it. Furthermore, it helps you to understand culture and history through the language."

M10 did not feel adapted to life in Germany, and it was not as interesting as he expected. He found a job in China that was related to studying in Germany, which was a great combination for him. On the one hand, he could enjoy the benefits that the experience in Germany had brought him, but, on the other hand, he did not need to stay in Germany and be lonely.

In contrast, some participants decided to stay longer in Germany than they had expected. For example, F2 planned to go back to China right after graduation. After three and a half years of living in Germany, however, she found that she actually enjoyed life there, even though sometimes she felt alone. Nevertheless, in Germany, she found that she led her own life and she had a sense of belonging there. As a 29-year-old single female, she said that she belonged to the cohort of "leftover women" in China.[517] "*But in Germany, no one cares. I feel much more comfortable here.*" Therefore, the decision to continue staying in Germany served to create a buffer zone for F2.

[517] Anni Kajanus, "Journey of The Phoenix: Overseas Study and Women's Changing Position in China" (PhD, diss., University of Helsinki, 2014).

Similar to F2, several female participants echoed: *"I don't want to get married now and have children now, like my other classmates and friends back home*." "*I am not ready to settle down yet."* They realised that staying in Germany was a great way to escape these problems. At the same time, however, they understood these issues could not be avoided forever; nevertheless, for a year or two, they wanted to take advantage of this opportunity. Since they have changed themselves, going back home could be a source of apprehension. Staying in Germany provided access to freedom but going back home to China might mean losing it. Participants wanted to avoid or delay their commitment, motivated by their new experiences in Germany.

Even some students who did not think they had good job opportunities in Germany stayed for a longer time than they had planned. For example, F7 found a job at Deutsche Bahn with a stable income. She did not consider going back right away, even though it was a job that she would never consider doing if she were in China, partially because it was not as well paid there as in Germany, but most importantly, because working as a physical labourer had been something she looked down upon. Nevertheless, she readily took the job in Germany. Being financially independent gave her and other like her more power to make new decisions.

In addition to changes in plans for the duration of their stay abroad, some participants changed their minds about the location of their stay and their career paths. There were participants who decided to explore their lives more by leaving Germany but continuing to stay abroad. They wanted to have a more cosmopolitan lifestyle before settling down. For example, M8 said, "*This is not what I planned at all*," but he was very excited about going to a new place after three years in Germany. Some decided to go to other European countries, such as F4, who decided to go to Vienna for Ph.D. studies, or M15, who went to Italy, also for his Ph.D. They felt their stay in Germany was not enough and they wanted to extend their experiences abroad more. M3 worked as a kitchen hand in a Chinese restaurant after his graduation because he felt that he would never do that in China, and that he would not be allowed to do it either, but Germany offered him space to try.

In summary, the lived experience of living and studying in Germany as a master's student had an extensive influence on the participants' new choice of location and career. It has been argued that a student's career path after graduation is the most relevant determinant of whether that

person stays abroad or returns to the home country.[518] However, I argue the decision to leave or go depends more on the experience of their stay abroad and the potential stress they anticipate experiencing after their return. For some of the participants, the decision to leave Germany right away after graduation changed. They became fully aware of the consequences and costs of their new decision, as well as its benefits and advantages. For others, the decision to finish a master's program within two years changed gradually; some students decided to prolong their studies. On the one hand, they could enjoy the benefits of being students; on the other hand, this gave them more time to ask themselves what they really wanted. Even though some were factoring in the possibility of immigration, they were still uncertain about the future. They felt Germany had offered them a space to think and to be themselves. The experience of living in Germany also changed quite a few participants' decisions about their future prospects for career and life choices, "since settlement is a process, rather than a kind of event."[519]

Conversely, some other participants who had planned to stay in Germany for a longer period of time also changed their minds. Some of them decided to return to China right after graduation. For some students, studying abroad became "a prelude to eventual migration" and "might be called experimental migration over long periods of time or migration with extended options."[520] This is an important point for future researchers, who could reconceptualise international students as potential "permanently settled" migrants. However, one should also pay attention to the fact that the current dynamic after graduation is different from the situation from twenty or thirty years ago: Studying abroad, or studying in developed countries in particular, was no longer seen as an upward trajectory for all Chinese students. China's strong economic growth and favourable domestic policies for returnees have encouraged more and more of them to return home after their graduation abroad.[521]

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[518] Xueying Han et al., "Will They Stay or Will They Go? International Graduate Students and Their Decisions to Stay or Leave the U.S. Upon Graduation," *PLOS ONE* 10, no. 3 (2015): e0118183, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0118183.

[519] Helen, Hayes, "(Be)Coming Home: An Existential Perspective on Migration, Settlement and the Meanings of Home," *Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis*, 18 no. 1 (2007), 2-16.

[520] Gungwu Wang, "Sojourning: The Chinese Experience," in *Don't Leave Home: Migration and the Chinese.* Wang Gungwu, (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press:1996), 54-72.

[521] Youyou Zhou, "Chinese Students Increasingly Return Home after Studying Abroad," *Quartz*, 2018, https://qz.com/1342525/chinese-students-increasingly-return-home-after-studying-abroad.

Belonging is also about becoming, so many participants started to think about how they wanted to raise future children. Some of them also worried about their children being born in Germany and losing a Chinese-speaking environment. Therefore, their sense of "becoming" was also multifaceted and contained ambivalence and uncertainty.

Although, for my research project, graduation seemed to be an end, for these participants, this was just the beginning of a new chapter in their lives. If the decision to study abroad was a decision made both by students and their families, the decision of the duration of their stay seemed to be a more independent decision made by the students alone.

7.8 Summary

In conclusion, how these students expressed their Chineseness through their encounters with different people (such as Germans and other Chinese people from places other than mainland China) reshaped their Chinese identity. Three aspects of the students' understanding of Chineseness were also interdependent. Chineseness might be ethnical, political, and cultural at the same time. Chineseness developed from being something these participants took for granted to being something which was debatable. As Ang argued, Chineseness should not be set into a fixed category of race and ethnicity, but should be imagined as an open and indeterminate symbol whose meaning can be continually renegotiated and re-presented.[522] That is to say, there can be various different Chinese identities instead of only one.[523] Some of the students interviewed started to discover different possibilities of being "Chinese" and started to dissect the complexity of the entity of "Chineseness," which was also interrelated to their sense of belonging in Germany or in this world at large.

Many students learned to develop different relationships to Chineseness and ponder their Chineseness. Being "Chinese" became more or less vague, and the boundary between "Chinese" and "non-Chinese" became therefore blurred. It became hard to state clearly where "Chineseness" ends and where "non-Chineseness" starts. While the longing for "Chineseness" was a persistent influence on students' experiences abroad in part, perceptions of what

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[522] Ang Ien, "The Differential Politics of Chineseness," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 22, no. 1 (1994): 73.

[523] Ibid, 73.

constitutes “Chineseness” were still open to debate. Being Chinese thus became something that was no longer simple but rather was ambiguous to some extent, and it therefore provided many of the young people abroad in this study the opportunity to contemplate what kind of “Chinese” they wanted to become.

Chapter 8 Case reconstructions and typology

In this chapter, I will present three cases using the biological case reconstruction and types I developed.[524] Each case reconstruction begins with my ethnographic experience with the interview partner. This is then followed by a self-presentation by the interview partner and a reconstructed biographical narrative story. Each case then concludes with a typology analysis. All interviews were held in Mandarin Chinese and the quotes were translated into English by me. All names were also masked to provide anonymity.

8.1 Type A: The patriotic delegate and tactical adapter

The first type of biographical trajectory is deeply impacted by the Chinese official patriotic narrative. This type is represented by Zhang, whose experience in Germany was impacted by this narrative. She strove to be a "role model" for Chinese students who studied in Germany in terms of "integrating" into the local society successfully. On the one hand, Zhang regarded the task of changing Germans' negative opinions about China as her main obligation and responsibility in Germany. On the other hand, she regarded her study-abroad experience as a form of international cultural capital that could help her to become an international talent or a cosmopolitan elite. However, her vision of globalization was based on a potential China-centric world order. I will present Zhang's case reconstruction in the following section.

8.1.1 Ethnographic experience

I made Zhang's acquaintance in October 2014 at a German language course offered by the Department of Social Science at the university. When I first met her, she was a 24-year-old, second-semester student of political science. While most of the Chinese students in that class remained quiet when the instructor asked questions, Zhang was always the first to raise her hand to share her opinion and proffer answers. Zhang therefore caught my attention during the first session of the class.

[524] See Chapter Three for more information about the methodology of this research.

A week later, I came across her again in the library after the German class. I introduced myself, explaining my research project, and invited her to participate. After commenting on how meaningful my research project was and its potential benefits for Chinese students, as well as pointing out that many Chinese students she knew did not make efforts to "integrate" themselves into the local society, she gladly accepted my invitation. We befriended each other on WeChat,[525] and this allowed me to keep up to date on her recent uploads. A week later, she invited me to her apartment for dinner so we could carry out the first interview. She lived in a private one-room apartment with a kitchen and bathroom, close to the campus. Zhang was very proud of how she kept her room nice and clean, and when she was welcoming me, she said to me, "*Look, my room is even more organized than the Germans*," which assumed that she seemed to be in competition with German students. She then offered me a meal consisting of Chinese noodles purchased from a local Asian food shop. During the dinner, she expressed her dislike of German food: "*It's just unbearable! Our food is much better.*"

After our first interview, which lasted two and half hours, we became Facebook friends. This allowed me to follow her updates through Facebook in addition to WeChat. Later in this chapter I will discuss the differences regarding the content of her uploads on WeChat and Facebook.

In total, I conducted two more formal interviews with her after the first one in the following two years in Germany, as well as two telephone interviews after her graduation and return to China. During each interview, Zhang would talk at fairly great length. Normally, her first narrative would last over 30 minutes to 50 minutes, followed by her second or third narrative. Therefore, our interviews normally last for two to three hours.

8.1.2 Self-presentation

Zhang's self-presentation was the longest one (60 minutes) among all interviews that I conducted. Zhang mostly framed her life story using her educational trajectory and her family's influence and mainly focused on the topic of studying abroad. I can assume that part of this was a result of my introduction about my research interest when we met, but I could also sense

[525] See Chapter Four for more information regarding WeChat.

that this was the life experience that Zhang was really proud of and most wanted to present. The main text forms used in the first part of the interview were description and argumentation. After my opening question, Zhang started her life story with the sentence:

"*You should always know what you want and plan it in advance."*

Zhang adopted a second-person perspective to start her life story with a "suggestion." She attempted to legitimize herself as an experienced candidate for my interview because she believed that she had many related experiences to share. One hypothesis would be that Zhang regarded her story as a "successful" one and wanted to share it with me and/or with a larger potential audience through my interview, especially given the fact that Zhang was very supportive when she heard about my research topic and pointed out that "*there are so many Chinese students who don't make enough efforts in order to integrate themselves in Germany*." Therefore, she might have wanted to present herself as a "different" and "successful" role model for other Chinese students. She was very open with me, and she showed great enthusiasm for me and my research. This led to a brief narration about her choice of universities in China and then her choice of studying abroad.

In the next sequence, she started her description of her earlier life by introducing her parents for the first time, in order to argue why she could make all these decisions and accomplish goals.

My mother raised me alone when I was little because my dad worked in another city. She is a very independent woman. In the school, I was the class president. My mom was the parent representative. She was responsible for telling how she educated her child to other parents. She is the head nurse at work and has been promoted as an associate professor[...] *When I was in school, she hired foreigners to come to our home and teach me English. In Sanya at that time, that was very advanced. She has contributed very much in terms of my education.*

Zhang presented her mother as a successful middle-class career woman as well as a good parent. It seemed that her mother had already started to prepare Zhang since an early age for her international education such as by hiring an English teacher for her. Zhang did not mention too much about her father; this might have been due to the fact that her father was not present often

when she was a child and she felt closer to her mother.

The next sequence was a narration about her experience on the airplane to Germany. She met the passengers who were sitting next to her. They were a German couple who were just returning to Germany from a visit to China. They also lived in the same state where Zhang would be studying. In the end, the German couple gave Zhang their business card and invited her to visit them. It is interesting to note that Zhang used Chinese kinship terms to address this couple. She referred to this couple, who were around 75 years old, as *Yeye* and *Nainai* in Chinese, which literally means "grandfather" and "grandmother." She felt more comfortable addressing them with kinship terms instead of their names, because, to her, using their names sounded disrespectful in terms of Chinese tradition, but she also did not feel comfortable calling them "grandparents" in German. Therefore, using Chinese forms to address them was a buffer for her to shorten the distance between her and them while keeping respect for her German contacts at the same time.

The invitation to visit the family was presented by Zhang as a sign that she was welcomed by Germans. Consistent with the previous sequence, Zhang presented herself as a "capable" person who could immediately find German contacts and be welcomed by them, and therefore was an "ideal" role model for Chinese students abroad.

The next sequence was a long argumentation together with a narration of 60 lines regarding her life in Germany. This sequence moved into the second thematic field, which could be formulated as "I have a strong national sentiment and I have to defend my country." This sequence started with:

Living abroad, one should respect the local cultures. But there is a principle, which is that no one should ever hurt my national feelings. I have been a class president since I was little in school, and I am a person with a strong sense of collectivism. I could give up my own benefits for my country. You can insult me, but you can absolutely not insult my country. Even though I know that our country may have problems like this and that, I don't want you to tell me with a critical attitude.

The second theme that Zhang touched on in her life in Germany was an argument with strong emotion. Zhang presented herself as an individual with a strong sense of nationalism. She

emphasized her experience of being a "class president" in China, which might relate to the education that she received from school. Zhang also explicitly expressed her need for her German contacts to respect her "national feeling," which she regarded as the main principle for her life in Germany. She seemed to feel hurt personally if others criticized China.

She reported her father's influence on her "national feeling." She explicitly said twice "*my dad is a person who has a strong national feeling."* She also especially emphasized her father's education since she was little: *"He taught me the phrase 'chun wang chi hai'* (唇亡齿寒).[526] *If your nation is weak, you are weak too. Even though you change your nationality, your face won't change, and your blood won't change either."*

She expressed her strong identification with her father's statement by taking on her father's voice with deep emotion and then stopping her main narration. She presented herself as an inseparable part of the nation, and as having an unchangeable relationship with the nation too. After this, she seemed to immerse herself in her own national sentiment until I interrupted her with further questions.

8.1.2.1 Self-presentation on social media

After getting to know Zhang a bit more, I found that she was very active on social media, so I decided also to take Zhang's self-presentation on social media into account.

Zhang used WeChat for her Chinese social contacts and Facebook for her international friends as platforms to share her experiences in Germany respectively. Her first update on WeChat Moment was the first night she arrived in Germany in March 2013. "*The first night in a foreign land, so cold. But there were so many kind-hearted people.* (Smiley)". This interestingly contraindicated what she told me about her arrival experience, which was that she stayed in a hotel by herself feeling lonely. In line with her main narratives, she presented herself as someone who was capable of adapting to her new environment quickly, and "so many kind-hearted people" also presented the idea that she was well-received by German people, by whom

[526] The Chinese idiom *chun wang ci han* 唇亡齿寒 literally means without the lips, the teeth feel the cold; figuratively, it refers to things that are intimately interdependent.

she might have been referring to the old German couple she met on the airplane who invited her to visit. Settling abroad alone for the first time can be difficult and lonely, but Zhang emphasized the positive aspects of her new life, with possible exaggeration of the positive side by saying "*so many*." Given the fact that the readers of the updates were her family and friends back in China, she might have wanted to present a relatively positive image of her new life in Germany as well as her capability of living alone.

In contrast, on Facebook, she first registered an account and posted her first group of 12 pictures one week after her arrival in Germany, with the title of "Mein Leben" (my life). Given the readers would be her new friends in Germany, mainly non-Chinese, these pictures included pictures of her standing on the beach in Sanya, Hainan, her hometown, a picture of her touching the old city wall in the Forbidden City in Beijing, and her dance performance in Chinese Han traditional dress at her Chinese university, as well as a picture of her dressed in a graduation gown at her university. It seems that what she wanted to present of "her life" was a combination of personal achievement and "being Chinese." This also reflected her father's teachings about the interrelation between states and individuals.

Interestingly enough, Zhang did not mention her social life during her first year in Germany. However, from the pictures in which she was tagged by friends and those uploaded herself on Facebook, I could see that she participated in several activities like cooking with classmates from her German language class as well as one-day trips to the mountains and travel to other cities in Germany with either Chinese or international friends. She skipped all this in her narration of her life story and, accordingly, she also did not update much about her first year on the Chinese social media platform "WeChat," except for a couple of pictures of her alone in front of a European style building in Germany. It seemed that she did not really see her first year in Germany as a "proper" experience of studying and living in Germany, since she felt that she did not really immerse herself in "real German" life. Since all her classmates were non-Germans, she counted this period of time as a time of preparation for and transition to the real German life experience.

8.1.3 Reconstruction of Zhang's life history

Childhood and youth

Zhang was born in 1990, in Sanya City in Hainan Province, which is the southernmost island in China. It is located on the edge of the South China Sea and was a predominantly agricultural island. Prior to 1988, the island of Hainan, then an underdeveloped and peripheral part of Guangdong Province, gradually became a focus of attention and was positioned at the forefront under the Chinese "open and reform" policy in the late 1970s. As a part of a coastal regional development strategy, in the late 1970s and early 1980s four SEZ (Special Economic Zones)–Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, and Xiamen–were established along the eastern seaboard. In April 1988, which was about two years before Zhang was born, the island was made a separate province from Guangdong and was also designated as a Special Economic Zone (the biggest) in an effort to increase investment. The town of Sanya, where Zhang's family lived, developed into an urban city rapidly, especially with development of real estate and tourism-related industries.[527]

Against this social background, Zhang, the only child in her family, was born in an academic household. Both of her parents were born in the middle 1960s, and they were middle school classmates. Zhang's father was accepted by a university in Guangdong Province and studied agriculture (when Hainan was still part of Guangdong Province), while her mother studied in a nursing school. The social status of Zhang's maternal grandparents was higher than that of her paternal grandparents. Both of her maternal grandparents worked in the city hospital (her grandfather as a doctor and her grandmother as a midwife), whereas her paternal grandparents were peasants. Zhang was much closer to her maternal grandparents because she stayed with them in her early years when her parents were at work, but she never felt close to her paternal grandparents. She shared with me the story that her maternal grandmother used to tell her that her paternal grandparents' living environment was not hygienic enough. One can see there was a tension between the two extended families from different social statuses and that Zhang had been kept away from the lower social economic environment by her family.

[527] Kai Gu and Geoffrey Wall, "Rapid Urbanization in A Transitional Economy in China: The Case of Hainan Island," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 28, no. 2 (2007): 158-170, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9493.2007.00288.x.

Before Zhang was born, her father first worked in a state-owned enterprise and then later started his own agricultural company with his friends after Zhang was born. This might have benefited from the advantage policies in the SEZ in the middle 1990s. Zhang's mother first worked as a nurse and later was promoted to be a head nurse in the city hospital. Zhang's father was not often home due to his business; therefore, her mother took care of Zhang in her early years.

Whereas Zhang's mother served as a role model for her as an independent and capable woman, her father's influence was more ideological. Zhang talked about the ideological impact of her father repeatedly during our interviews. She mentioned that her father liked to sing "revolutionary songs" from the 1960s and 70s and read her many poems written by "Chairman Mao," which might be due to the influence of the Cultural Revolution when her father was a child and a teenager. From Zhang's description of her paternal grandparents, Zhang's father was born into a peasant family and had few social resources. However, he went to university and later managed to start his own business. His economic status could possibly have changed tremendously compared to his own parents as peasants. Zhang's father had possibly benefited from China's opening up and reform policy, and therefore he was thankful for this. It seemed logical for Zhang's father to identify himself with the national ideology.

From the family's socioeconomic background, one can make the hypothesis that Zhang's family could probably offer good resources for her education as the single child in the family. She had taken singing, ballet, and piano classes since she was six years old and had kept practicing during her whole youth. She considered herself as someone who had versatile talents and was good enough to "*compete with peers*" in addition to her school performance. It seemed that hobbies and talents also served as cultural capital for Zhang and her family.[528]

Zhang's dance teacher used to take pupils to perform for the army. Possibly due to this influence, Zhang had dreamed about becoming a soldier or studying in a military academy after high school. For her, joining in the army and fighting for the motherland against "foreign forces" was the most direct way to serve her country.

[528] Ellen Seiter, "Practicing at Home: Computers, Pianos, and Cultural Capital," in *Digital Youth, Innovation, and the Unexpected*, ed. Tara McPherson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 27–52, doi: 10.1162/dmal.9780262633598.027.

Zhang had been a class president since middle school, aiming to serve as a role model in morals. "*I could sacrifice anything in order to help the group. When I was younger, like in the 6th grade, the teacher told us we were going to picnic outside. My classmates brought their own bowls, but I brought extra bowls for everyone in the class, plus two big bags of firewood I had collected by myself. After the picnic I carried the entire lot home by myself. So, my classmates believed that I would do good things for them*."

As a child, Zhang tried to perform as a "selfless" individual who always thought of the needs of the group/class (bringing bowls and firewood for everyone). Her classmates also trusted her (she was always elected as aclass president). It seems she was quite satisfied about the fact that she became a class president, and she quoted from one of Mao's famous quotes: "*Masses have sharp eyes*," referring to her classmates as the "masses" who recognised her efforts to serve them.

During further questioning after Zhang's narration, I asked her more about her memories regarding her national feelings. She told me her most vivid memories were in 2008, when she was in her last year of high school. There were two incidents: one was during the Olympic Games torch relay and the other was the Sichuan earthquake. On May, 4, 2008, Zhang's hometown Sanya was the first stop for the torch relay within Mainland China, "after a protest-harried overseas journey."[529] All of the students from Zhang's high school were granted one day free from class, and were asked to go to support and witness this grand occasion. This would not be a common occurrence in Chinese high schools, especially for final-year students who would have their *gaokao*/university entrance exam in a month, given that the education system gives full attention to the *gaokao*. The other incident was a week later, on May 12, 2008, when some towns in Sichuan Province were completely destroyed by a massive earthquake, which caused hundreds of thousands of people to be dead or missing. These two incidents caused strong nation-wide nationalism.[530]

"*We arrived there at four o'clock in the morning and stayed there until 12 o'clock noon. We didn't eat, didn't drink, and didn't go to the toilet, but no one complained about anything. The*

[529] Ben Blancard, "Torch in Mainland China Gets Thunderous Welcome," *Reuters*, 2008, https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-olympics-torch-idUKHKG6070220080508. There was a disruption of the Olympic torch relay in Paris, due to several protests against Chinese government.
[530] Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 145.

whole population was excited, and we waved our national flag and sang the national anthem together over and over again. The emotion was very strong, and I will never ever forget that scene where everyone there was united for our country […] *Same after the earthquake, I felt so sad and donated all my pocket money to save my country.*"

Entering university and *Junxun*

After high school, Zhang took the *gaokao*[531]. She entered university and chose Public Administration as her subject. She dreamed of becoming a civil servant, working in the government, after graduation. However, before university, most university students are required to participate in military training, or *junxun*. Zhang was the only person among my interview partners who mentioned her experience of military training in her life story. In China, it became the norm from the early 1990s that new university students have to undergo a short period (one or two weeks) of military training before class. A significant component of military training is patriotic education. Students are expected to march and stand up straight for hours and, most importantly, to learn how to be obedient and submit to "organization" and "discipline." The stated aim is to "enable students to master basic military skills and theories, enhance their awareness of national defence and national security, and inculcate the values of patriotism, collectivism and revolutionary heroism."[532] Zhang was very proud that she was granted an award as a role model during military training.

During the next four years, she saw it as a big accomplishment to be admitted as a member of the CCP. She explained to me that it was difficult for her to be admitted to the Party. Firstly, her grades had to be in the top ten in her class, but her grades were not good enough for her to be admitted to the Party in the beginning. Then, she wrote a motivation letter twice the length that was asked. In China, the state attempts to recruit Chinese individuals into the CCP and its affiliated organizations from the time they are children. School-aged children are first recruited while they are in a primary school into the organization the Young Pioneers, which is administered by the Communist Youth League of China and under the leadership of the Party.

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[531] *Gaokao* 高考, short for National Higher Education Entrance Examination 普通高等学校招生全国统一考试. For more information about Chinese university entrance examination, see article of Gareth Davey, Chuan De Lian and Louise Higgins, "The university entrance examination system in China", *Journal of Further and Higher Education* Vol. 31, iss. 4, 2007.

[532] See Chapter Four for more information regarding the military training at university.

When students enter secondary school and turn 14 years old, they are recruited into the Youth League. This practice becomes de facto in that almost every student must apply and join the Youth League when they reach 14 years old, except for a small number of special cases, including those deemed unqualified–for example, because of poor school performance–and those determined to defer. [533]

However, official CCP membership is not as easy to get as membership in its affiliated organizations. The CCP recruits students as early as in high school, but enrols more university students. As Zhang explained to me, many students seem enthusiastic about joining the CCP, and the competition to join the Party in universities is relatively high. This is because CCP members have the potential to gain an advantage in the job market, especially in securing well-paying positions in government and state-owned enterprises. As Rosen noted, students' pursuit of party membership is usually a necessary investment to enhance their opportunities of finding decent jobs and making a comfortable livelihood.[534] Thus, it has been argued that voluntary membership may be more a result of personal cost-benefit calculations than of deep political commitment. [535] Gang argued that youth membership in the Communist Party was no indication of political proclivity since most applied for the membership in university only because it could help them to secure a future career.[536] Nevertheless, Lin and his colleagues' findings showed that Party members have relatively more loyalty to the Chinese state than non-members.[537] They argued that CCP membership and student cadre identification showed a consistent impact on students' political identities over time.[538] Students with CCP membership were both more likely to attain leadership roles and to be nationalistic than those who had not been members.[539]

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[533] Shiru Wang, *Cyberdualism in China: The Political Implications of Internet Exposure of Educated Youth*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017).
[534] Stanley Rosen, "Contemporary Chinese Youth and The State," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 02 (2009): 359, doi:10.1017/s0021911809000631.
[535] Shiru Wang, *Cyberdualism in China: The Political Implications of Internet Exposure of Educated Youth*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 20-30.
[536] Gang Guo, "Party Recruitment of College Students in China," *Journal of Contemporary China*,14, no. 43 (2005): 371-393, doi:10.1080/10670560500065508.
[537] Fen Lin, Yanfei Sun and Hongxing Yang, "How Are Chinese Students Ideologically Divided? A Survey of Chinese College Students' Political Self -Identification," *Pacific Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2015): 51-78.
[538] Fen Lin, Yanfei Sun and Hongxing Yang, "How Are Chinese Students Ideologically Divided? A Survey of Chinese College Students' Political Self -Identification," *Pacific Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2015): 51-78.
[539] Ching-Ling Wu and Wei Bao, "The Effects of Individual Characteristics,"; Elina Sinkkonen, "Nationalism, Patriotism and Foreign Policy Attitudes among Chinese University Students," *The China Quarterly*, no. 216 (2013): 1045–63.

Zhang also agreed with the tendency described above. Therefore, she tried to make a clear distinction between her Chinese classmates at the university and herself. She believed herself to be a much better-qualified CCP member because she truly believed in the CCP's official ideology. She had a fully internalized belief in the regime and was ready to make personal sacrifices for the state. "*I believe the most important thing to be a CCP member is to become a good person and help others. The only difference between CCP members and non-CCP members is the moral requirement of CCP members might be even higher."* One can see that Zhang's decision to be part of the CCP was not mainly based on her political attitude but rather on a semi-religious devotion.

Decision to study abroad in Germany

In her third year of university, Zhang decided to study abroad after graduation. She did not really elaborate on the reason she chose to study abroad. I had the impression that she already assumed that I, as a Chinese student in Germany myself, would agree that studying abroad was clearly a better choice since "*the students who got accepted from universities abroad were given titles of 'graduate with honours*.'"

Zhang said, "*At the beginning, I wanted to study in the United States, but I didn't do well on my TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language]. My English has always been bad, so I decided to learn a completely new language. Since I cannot apply for universities in the US, Canada, UK, or Australia, only Europe was left open for me. I checked online about study in Europe, and then found out Germany is the best one in Europe with the best economy. It didn't take Germany a long time before it stood up again after the Second World War. They must have something amazing. So, I wanted to see the country*."

Zhang's decision to choose UK and US universities was possibly influenced by the reputation of their universities. The ranking of universities is very popular in China. When students look for universities, their ranking is one of the most important factors they will look for.

Since the first international university rankings were made public in China in 2003, these rankings have become one of the main criteria by which policymakers around the world measure institutional performance. Some scholars have criticised that these ranking systems only set narrow criteria by which all institutions are measured and that they contribute to the

reinforcement of the hegemonic role of the Anglo-Saxon model of higher education, particularly that of the United States.[540] Nevertheless, reputations seem to guarantee potential job opportunities. Therefore, the reputation of universities normally plays an important role in the decision of Chinese students to study abroad.

It seems Zhang was also influenced by this ranking system. However, since Zhang did not pass the TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language], she could not apply to English-speaking countries. She "blamed" her hometown Hainan for being "less develop," resulting in her "broken English." She said, "*In Hainan, no one can speak proper English, and our teachers are also not competent. I didn't learn English well in school*." It is interesting that she blamed her failure in English on her hometown's low quality of English education. She made a decision to start learning a new language. Changing from learning English to learning another new language showed Zhang's strong motivation to study abroad. However, we can also see that her destination choices for "studying abroad" were limited to so-called Western countries. Her final choice of Germany for its economic status showed her understanding that a good country is always associated with a strong economy. One could also interpret that Zhang's motive for "studying abroad" was to experience the "Western world." It was clear that Zhang had a very vague idea about what the "Western world" was.

Zhang started to learn German in her fourth year of university on weekends. However, this was not enough, so right after her graduation, she packed everything with her and travelled to Tianjin directly, about 1,000 km away from where her university was. She signed up for an intensive German class in the Goethe Institute. She prepared for her test diligently, and after one year she was able to apply for master's degree programs in Germany. The studying abroad agency helped her through all the application processes, including the APS (Die Akademische Prüfstelle) and university applications. In the end, she received an admission letter with language requirements, which meant that she had to firstly learn German in Germany and pass the DSH (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang) before she was allowed to enter her master's program finally.[541]

[540] Imanol Ordorika and Marion Lloyd, "International Rankings and The Contest for University Hegemony," *Journal of Education Policy* 30, no. 3 (2014): 385-405, doi:10.1080/02680939.2018.979247.
[541] According to Zhang, DSH is relatively easier than other standard German language tests, because the students pay their classes to pass DSH, and the teachers are normally the examinant too.

Fresh impression upon arrival

When she arrived in Göttingen, Zhang felt that it was like a "*fairy tale*": "*It was so nice, so beautiful. The houses here are very different, and I like their timber-frame houses.*" Zhang also felt the people in Germany were also "very nice." "*Whenever I opened my map and looked for directions, there would be Germans coming to ask if I needed help. How nice was that!*" Her first few weeks seems to reflect what Oberg referred to as "the honeymoon period" in his model of "cultural shock" in the field of intercultural communication.[542] Zhang's plan for her future at this point was to "*stay in Germany for a few years after graduation, in order to collect some working experiences before returning to China*."

First shock regarding national sentiment

The very first challenge Zhang faced was in her first German language class in Germany. Different from her classmates in China who were all Chinese students, her classmates in Germany came from different parts of the world. Before the class, the teacher asked the students to introduce themselves. A student introduced herself as someone from Taiwan and did not mention anything related to "China." In other words, she identified herself as a national of Taiwan as a sovereign state and rejected being a citizen of the People's Republic of China. Zhang was quite shocked by this statement because, for Zhang, Chinese (*zhongguoren*) and Taiwanese (*taiwanren*) identities were nested, rather than parallel. Students in Mainland China are educated to believe that, Taiwan is an inseparable province of China, instead of an independent country or any political entity. Taiwanese identity is subordinate to Chinese identity. Zhang believed that the unification of Taiwan and Mainland China was *"the shared desire of Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad*."[543]

Therefore, Zhang waited for her turn to introduce herself and said, "*China has two islands as provinces. I come from the smaller one*." In her logic, the big and small islands referred to Taiwan and Hainan respectively. By indicating the fact that she was from the smaller one, she was hoping that her classmates would understand that Taiwan was the bigger island province

[542] The model of Culture Shock was proposed as four stages: Honeymoon-frustration-adjustment-acceptance. Kalervo Oberg, "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments," *Practical Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (1960): 177-182, doi:10.1177/009182966000700405.
[543] "Hu Jintao tichu xin xingshi xia fazhan liang an guanxi si dian yijian" (Hu Jintao proposes four opinions on cross-Strait relations under the new situation), *Renmin ribao* (*People's Daily* (overseas edition)), 5 March 2005.

of China. Zhang was very proud of herself for coming up with this solution: instead of challenging her "Taiwanese compatriot" directly, she believed that she had "defended" the unification of her motherland China in front of her classmates in a very "subtle" way.

Entering an official master's degree program

After taking intensive German courses for a year, Zhang passed the exam. She was finally allowed by the university to enter her master's degree study program of politics. Since there seemingly used to be (and still is) a tendency to regard Chinese students as quiet and passive,[544] Zhang made efforts to challenge this stereotype. She told me that, at the beginning of the semester, she set up a rule for herself: she had to ask the professor one question in each class, instead of sitting in the corner and keeping silent. "*I wanted to change the stereotype of Chinese students. I don't want to be thought of as a quiet and passive Chinese student* […] *I wanted to show that Chinese students could also be smart and active."*

Zhang also worked hard because she believed that *"the harder I work, the better the impression I would leave on the Germans here. They would like to learn about China because of me* […] *I just have this sense of purpose: once I am abroad, I am a business card of the country, so I have to become the best. On the other hand, this sense of purpose also helped me never ever feel lonely here in Germany. You will have the feeling that the country has always been with you. You always feel purposeful and will never lose motivation. Every single thing is meaningful, no matter to my country or me. I might just need to do one good thing, and then I would help people to change their negative opinion about China."*

It seems Zhang's strong attachment to the state of China served as a remedy for loneliness abroad. This loneliness was also in line with the annihilation of personal advantages, such as the loss of the priority of being a class president and a leading dancer in the university. Zhang personalized China as a person who had lost power in the world; therefore, Zhang could more easily resonate with her country after she went abroad. In other words, Zhang applied the salience of identification with China as a strategy to confront the threat of the loss of attention back home.

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[544] Jinyan Huang and Cowden Peter Alexander, "Are Chinese Students Really Quiet, Passive and Surface Learners? – A Cultural Studies Perspective," *Canadian and International Education / Education canadienne et internationale*, 38 (2), Article 6 (2009), http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cie-eci/vol38/iss2/6.

Since Zhang's master's degree program was about politics, the topics of her seminars were usually politics related. From her "unpleasant" experience with her classmate from Taiwan, Zhang learnt her lesson: one has to become active enough to make oneself clear first. In order to avoid future possible "misunderstanding," she tried to seize opportunities in class to clarify her "principles" to her classmates.

"I told my German classmates from very early on that I was very patriotic. I love my country. I could accept any friendly discussions regarding politics. But I would reject discussions with evil intentions, or bad topics."

Zhang learnt to be "strategic" regarding critiques about China. For example, "*when they challenged the one-child policy in China, I said: Do you know that if our family had had other children, I would not be able to study abroad today? If you can't raise three kids well, why not just raise one? Our national situation was not able to raise so many people. What you should do is not to argue, but to explain the other reasons. To me, I should actually be thankful for this policy, because it offered me a wonderful childhood. Otherwise my parents wouldn't have had enough energy to take care of me all the time. You shouldn't just listen to your media. So through this way, I would instil some positive information into them. You should not let them think less of us or always negatively* [...] *You have to use the perspective that Germans can understand and appreciate, instead of following their logic.*"

In addition to looking for more strategies to defend against negative comments regarding China, Zhang also started to collect positive comments from German media about China, such as reports about Chinese high-speed trains. In this way, she would feel more confident about China's progress as well as about being Chinese in Germany. She talked about her China dream as "*hoping that when they talk about our country, there is only respect, truly respect, no judgment nor discrimination*."

Zhang firstly set the boundary clearly between her German classmates and herself. It is interesting that she differentiated between two sorts of discussions regarding Chinese politics (either "friendly" or "with evil intention"). Accordingly, she found that all her classmates were "very nice" and "no one mentioned 'anti-China' related topics" to her.

This statement might protect her from being "hurt" by discussions with her German classmates, but also prevented her from hearing from different perspectives.

Outside of the classroom, ironically, in order to be "a good model" as a Chinese student, Zhang tried to avoid the Chinese community in the university and beyond. She did not participate in any activities organized by the Chinese students' association or initiate any friendships with Chinese people. She did not want to contribute to the impression Germans have about Chinese who "*always stuck together abroad and never went out of their comfort zone.*" It seemed that she also had internalized this impression. Therefore, she tried to make her own effort to present a different type of Chinese student. However, interestingly enough, she did gladly accept my research participation invitation and we met regularly; therefore, in a way, I, as a researcher, became her only Chinese contact during this period of time.

Making German friends

In order to practice the German language, Zhang was eager to make German friends. She also revealed to me that her own secret was "*smiling*" to everyone she met in class to make herself "approachable" by Germans. My hypothesis was that she was not comfortable enough to approach the Germans; therefore, she made herself approachable to her counterparts. At the end of her first semester, she made friends with a German classmate who often sat next to her. It is worthwhile mentioning that she called her friend *tongzhuo* during the interviews, which literally means the "same desk" or "desk mate" in Chinese; *tongzhuo* usually refers to a pupil who always sits next to another pupil in school. Therefore, a desk mate implies a relatively close relationship, due to time and spatial proximity.[545]

On the other hand, Zhang also explained what she had shared with her German friend:

"I introduced Yuanming Park Palace (Yuanmingyuan 圆明园)[546] *to my German friend and*

[545] There were songs describing this kind of close relationship in Chinese popular songs, such as "my deskmate" (tongzhuo de ni, 同桌的你), composed by Gao, Xiaosong.

[546] *Yuanming* Garden Palace, 圆明园 is a palace and garden complex in northwestern Beijing, built in the 18th and early 19th centuries and was firstly destroyed by the British and French allies in 1860 during the Second Opium War. *Yuanmingyuan* has become a symbol of a century of humiliation for the Chinese nation after 1949 and has been especially emphasized in patriotic education campaigns since the 1990s. See Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 52-53.

showed her a picture of the Palace, and I asked, 'Do you know how pretty it used to be?' She was surprised and asked me what happened. I said it was stolen by European powers (*Ouzhou lieqiang* 欧洲列强) *and I said history would not repeat itself,* ***absolutely not****. What was taken from us would be returned to us in the end. [laugh. This is history and no one can ever change it, but I can only say it will not happen again."*

By telling her German friend the story of *Yuanming* Park Palace, Zhang wanted to prove how the "European powers" in general used to "bully" China a century ago. This sense of national humiliation instilled through patriotic education back home was part of her collective memory but also an emotional burden.[547] In other words, Zhang shared the humiliation burden with her motherland, although obviously she did not experience this "humiliation" a century ago in person. It is interesting that Zhang mentioned this story by narrating the development of the friendship between her German friend and her. She regarded herself as a descendant of the victim, and it seemed essential to Zhang that she was able to share her emotional burden of national humiliation with her German friend.

Visiting a German family

At the end of her first semester, Zhang received an invitation from her German friend's family to celebrate Christmas together. For her, it was a big achievement regarding the construction of the friendship with her German friend. In order to "integrate" herself into the "German family life," she made much effort to make herself a "member" in the family, for example: "*When I met the whole family of my German friend, I couldn't remember everyone's name. And it's not polite anyway to call the elders by their names in China. I addressed them however my friend did, like I called her parents 'mom' and 'dad' too. My friends' family was very happy and liked me very much*."

Zhang wanted to be the Chinese role model student and "integrate" well into a German life through living with the German family. She used the word "integration," or in Chinese "*rongru*" (融入), in her narrative several times. She updated WeChat with several pictures of her Christmas stay with the family and wrote: "*I spent a traditional Christmas at my friend's family. Because they all expected my coming, like her grandmother's family and sister's family too, I*

[547] See Chapter Four for more information regarding the Patriotic Education Campaign.

have received many gifts […] *It was a beautiful day and my listening skills in German have improved a lot!"* The gifts seemed quite important to Zhang. They were a symbol of hospitality presented by the family and, for Zhang, a gesture of "acceptance" from a German family.

However, what Zhang did not share on social media was the "uncomfortable" experiences that she confronted, for example religious ones. On Christmas Eve, the family planned to visit church and join the worship ceremony, but Zhang didn't go with the family and she chose to stay home by herself. She said,

Because I think, em, I didn't feel comfortable. I could go to visit the church, but I wouldn't participate in the ceremony in the church. Partially because it's religious […] *I don't know. I would feel like I betrayed my country.* […] *I worshiped Guanyin*[548] *in China* […] *But I won't worship Jesus. I went to many churches in Germany, but I wouldn't worship anything there. I felt it's a bit strange, even though this might be a bit too exaggerated that it's the betrayal of one's country, but I won't do it based on my sentiment and principle to my country. I worship Guanyin as well, but it's nothing to do with religion, and it's about the sentiment to the country. Maybe because I felt like it's a Western thing. For example, before they eat, "mom" would say "Amen," and I would also say this along with her. But deep in my heart I know this "Amen" means something different: you are thankful to God, and I am thankful to "Guanyin" for letting me enjoy this great meal. I am always thankful, but just not to the Western* [god].

Zhang could not identify the exact reason she was not willing to go with the German family to the religious ceremony. However, from her arguments, one can understand it was not totally because it was "religious" that made her feel uncomfortable, but because she regarded "Christianity" as a "Western practice," or a "non-Chinese tradition." In contrast, the Buddhist religion, for her, was "Chinese" and was much more familiar to her, although Buddhism is not a pure "Chinese" religion but was introduced from India.[549] As Zhang stated, following the "Western" Christianity tradition might lead her to feel "betrayal" of her motherland and "violation" of her Chinese tradition.[550]

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[548] Guanyin or Kuan-yin has been worshipped as one of the most important objects in the Buddhist tradition in China. For more information see Chün-fan Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[549] For more information regarding the interaction in early introduction of Buddhism from India to China, see Tansen Sen, "The Spread of Buddhism To China: A Re-Examination of The Buddhist Interactions Between Ancient India and China," *China Report* 48, no. 1-2 (2012): 11-27, doi:10.1177/000944551104800202.

[550] Brian Hall, "Social and Cultural Contexts in Conversion to Christianity Among Chinese American College

To conclude, the first semester of her master's program was a great opportunity for Zhang to navigate herself through differences, make boundaries in the differences, and try to fit in what she felt comfortable with. While she was trying to fit into her new environment, her identity of being Chinese started to be salient. Paradoxically enough, her decision not to socialise with other Chinese people was also driven by the motivation of being a "better-integrated" Chinese student. Despite the differences and uncomfortable moments, Zhang was generally satisfied with her first year, especially with the experience of making friends with her German classmate and visiting the classmate's family. She summarised this year in Germany as: *"I felt like I was well integrated into German culture. You should learn it within their culture, not being isolated."*

Feeling discriminated against as Chinese

At the beginning of her third year, Zhang encountered an unpleasant incident: a toilet attendant mistook her for not paying the toilet fee after using a public toilet at a train station. Although it might sound trivial, Zhang narrated this story in much detail with 50 lines and with strong emotions, showing its importance to her life story in Germany.

"*I was so angry, because I obviously paid the money, and he didn't see it. The guy spoke to me so loudly that everyone could hear it. I shouted back, saying 'I did pay, and you could check the camera if you do have one. The reason you speak so loudly is that you want everyone to know that Chinese are fare dodgers* [...] *now the Chinese students are good at both English and German, don't ever think to bully us. We are not tourists, and we are students here. Got it?' So, my voice was loud, in order to make other people around also get the message. They should never ever belittle Chinese again. I think no matter what, after this, they will be a bit nicer, and they don't dare to say, 'No Dogs and No Chinese Admitted Anymore.' I was normally very quiet back in China, but I have to fight for Chinese people, not for myself. If you blame me, it's fine, but if you irritate my national sentiment, I will fight it back as a warrior*."

Of course, there is no way to know whether the attendant at the public toilet made a mistake or was "discriminating" against Zhang based on her ethnicity; what is important about the incident is Zhang's reaction to and explanation of it. She quickly related the experience of being mistaken for not paying the toilet fee to her collective memory of Chinese people being "bullied"

Students," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 2 (2006): 131-147, doi:10.1093/socrel/67.2.131.

in history. She felt "humiliated" by being mistaken for a "fare dodger" in public, and this personal feeling was connected directly to her "national humiliation" when Chinese were "belittled" and "bullied," which was what she was taught in the patriotic education back in China.

In order to "fight for Chinese people," as an individual, Zhang emphasised her identity as an "overseas student" and not a "tourist." She made a clear-cut division between these two labels. The possible stereotypical negative image of a Chinese tourist might be a person who does not speak a foreign language and does not behave according to the local rules.[551] Therefore, Zhang distanced herself from the "Chinese tourist" but presented herself as a well-educated "Chinese student" in Germany who could better represent Chinese people in general.

This incident seems to be a turning point for Zhang's experience in Germany to some extent. It was the first time or maybe the only time that Zhang had "fought" with a stranger verbally in public for the image of China in Germany. She seemed very frustrated about this experience. After finishing the narration of this incident, Zhang told me:

"*You will be Chinese forever. You can change your passport, but you can't change your blood and skin. Your black eyes and yellow skin won't change; you will be Chinese forever and never become a real part of the German society.*"

Thus, for her, integration and belonging are not achieved through cultural integration or German citizenship; rather, belonging is guaranteed by German origin. Compared to her summary of her first-year experience as feeling "well integrated into the German culture," the description of her feeling after the incident as never being "part of the German society" was rather contrary. Zhang started to apply a "primordialist" way of thinking about her ethnic identity. She believed that descent-based attributes such as "blood and skin" were what kept her from being "part of the German society." In other words, the feeling of being the "other" was obvious. She saw this "racialized" perspective of the "Chineseness" in her as something not only escapable but also somehow inferior.

[551] Tania Branigan, "Chinese Tourists Warned Over Bad Behaviour Oversea," *The Guardian*, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/17/chinese-tourists-warned-behaving-badly-wang-yang.

Starting to make Chinese friends

In her next semester, Zhag started to make Chinese friends. She explained that this was "*because I have been away from Chinese culture too far*." I believe this change was partially connected to her reflection on the "toilet incident": since she could not deny or change her ethnic identity as "Chinese" in Germany, she decided to go back and reconnect with her Chineseness in Germany. She made friends with two female Chinese students from her department. They usually met after class and cooked Chinese food together. They also travelled together outside of Germany. She told me that she had a great time hanging out and traveling with her Chinese friends. However, it is interesting that Zhang uploaded different pictures of her trip on WeChat and Facebook. The pictures that she uploaded on WeChat were both group photos and her individual photos, whereas on Facebook, she only uploaded her individual photos. Since Zhang mainly used Facebook to connect with her German friends and acquaintances, she might still have been trying to present an image of herself as not hanging out with other Chinese people. This was also consistent with her strong ongoing reluctance to join any activities of the Chinese students' association, where she could easily find Chinese peers. Yet, she distanced herself from the Chinese community online, although she explicitly said that she wanted to make some Chinese friends. It seems that she did not want to conform to the image that Chinese students only stick with other Chinese people.

Zhang started to talk about the difference between feeling at "*home*" and feeling as a "*guest*" explicitly. In our second formal interview, she told me "*the longer I stay in Germany, the less at home I feel*." She used an example to explain the feeling of home: "*If I was in prison, I would still be the child of my parents and they wouldn't abandon me. But if I were in prison, I don't know how many friends I would lose. Sometimes I felt like in Germany, the reasons you could have friends were firstly because of your good language ability; secondly because you behave properly. If you are a rude person, you won't have friends, but to family, they would accept you no matter what. This is the difference between the feeling of home and the feeling of being a guest here. To be able to be friends with Germans, you have to speak good German. And I am a very thoughtful person to my friends. What if someday I am not thoughtful anymore? Would the German friends still be nice to me?"*

Home for her seemed to be somewhere she could truly express herself freely without much effort, whereas, in Germany, she had to make her best effort to be able to be accepted by the

locals. Different from our first interview, in our second interview, Zhang felt less at home in Germany. There was still a clear line of demarcation between "Germans" and "Chinese" for her, no matter how hard she tried to "fit in." She said, "*I still feel that we are different from them as Chinese, even though I am in their circle and have good German friends, it's still different. We are not them* [...] *Germany is not my country, no matter how good it is.*" Zhang was trying hard to become "them," or at least to "be part of them." However, she was frustrated that she would never ever become "them," even though it seems that she was well accepted by "them."

Changing attitude toward her Japanese fellow student

At the end of the semester, Zhang needed to write a report of an interview as an assignment for her class. She decided to take advantage of the opportunity and interview a Japanese classmate from her German course about her attitude toward wars. She told me that she had always regarded Japan as an enemy of China and "hated" Japanese, but *"if I don't regard myself as Chinese, but as a normal student, then I will approach her. If I can keep neutral, I would listen to what she thinks and reflects* [...] *I want to know if I could be neutral enough to see this matter. Sometimes I try to convince myself to be neutral, but sometimes I feel like I have to be on the Chinese side. I am struggling between these two statuses* [...] *Sometimes I really struggle to decide* [...] *You are in a dilemma, such as your two selves have been torn apart and two voices are fighting with each other.*"

We can clearly see Zhang's struggle with her attitude toward her Japanese student classmate. On the one hand, Zhang was curious to hear the other side of the story from her Japanese classmate, but on the other hand, she felt she "betrayed" China while doing so. These two selves embedded in Zhang seemed mutually contradictory and incompatible in her belief system. However, she started to realize her absolute loyalty to her Chinese identity seemed to be somewhat "biased" and it restrained her from being "neutral" and even from opening up to opinions from other perspectives.

In the end, in order to finish her assignment and challenge herself, Zhang was able to convince herself to carry out the interview with the Japanese student. "*She told me that her family, grandparents, also suffered from the Japanese-Sino war, and lots of Japanese also died in China*. [...] *Even though Japan initiated the war, the people were also victims and they had*

traumatised memories regarding the war. [...] *I never thought of this from this perspective, unless you want to understand history as a neutral person. This perspective is very good, and I was not upset about it."*

Compared to her response to her Taiwanese classmate in her first year in Germany, Zhang had learnt to be willing to open herself up to difference and tried to understand other perspectives. From the interview, Zhang was able to be temporarily free from her loyalty of being "Chinese." She managed to put her "hostility" to Japan aside and understand the historical issue of the Japan-Sino war from a new perspective: a more human rather than nation-state political one. This interview proved that Zhang was in the process of opening up and trying to understand difference, which allowed some of her ingrained perspectives to be ready to be challenged and changed.

Final decision to go back to work in China

After two years of her master's program, Zhang had to make a decision about her future plans: she could either stay in Germany and search for jobs or go back to China. Different from her previous plan to stay in Germany and look for internships to enhance her profile, she decided to go back to work in China based on the following reasons:

"I don't want to stay here permanently, and I don't want my future children to lose our cultural environment. [...] *All my German friends and their families asked me to stay, but I told them no, because I was not brought up by them."*

She did not mention the employment opportunities of both countries but focused on her emotions. It seems that she valued this sense of belonging more. Zhang seemed not to identify herself with her current environment at all. Her reasons for returning to China were links to both her future ("I don't want my future children to lose our cultural environment") and her past ("I was not brought up by them"). Instead, it seemed that she wanted to go back to China for the sake of paying back those who had brought her up. Interestingly, she especially stressed that "all her German friends and their families" had asked her to stay in Germany but she refused.

It is also interesting to note how Zhang reflected on her own first impression in Germany in

our last interview: "*I was **not** overwhelmed upon the arrival. I just thought everything was different, so it was interesting. Not like everything was better in Germany than in China*." She seemed to try to downplay or justify her excitement upon her arrival while viewing her journey in Germany retrospectively: it was the "difference" that she felt about Germany, not that Germany was any "better" than her home country.

Regarding her career, Zhang changed her previous plan that she had had during her study in Germany, which was to work as a civil servant in China. When she went back to China, she started to work as a German teacher at a Chinese private high school that specialised in the teaching of foreign languages in Beijing. She was very satisfied with her work because she believed that she could not only teach the language but also share her successful experience of studying in Germany, which potentially could benefit the younger students in her class who wanted to go to study in Germany too: "*I can tell them what they should pay attention to when they study in Germany later."*

8.1.4 Case structure and case summary

Zhang was born in 1990, in Sanya, Hainan province, the southernmost province and island of China. She was born into a middle-class family with her father working as an agricultural specialist in an agricultural company and her mother working as a head nurse in the local hospital. Influenced by her father in the family and by patriotic education in school, Zhang developed a strong allegiance to the state of China.

After coming to Germany, she faced her first challenge in her first class: A Taiwanese student didn't introduce herself as Chinese. She was very surprised and angry. After entering a master's program and studying with German classmates, she avoided the Chinese community in order to fit in with her German friends' circle and represent a better Chinese student. She met her first German friend and was invited by her family for Christmas. Even though they liked her, she could not convince herself to participate in the religious ceremony because it made her feel that she would have betrayed her country. In her second year, she felt discriminated against after the "toilet incident" when she was accused of not paying the fee. She started to make Chinese friends in Germany and did not extend her German friends' circle after that. She also interviewed a Japanese classmate and tried her best to understand another perspective.

However, this made her feel "split" between understanding the *Other* and feeling that she was betraying China. After she finished her master's degree, she decided to go back to China and become a German language teacher. Zhang's comments about her experiences in Germany were also constantly peppered with statements distinguishing between "Germany" and "China."

8.1.5 The "patriotic delegate and tactical adapter" type

Zhang represents a specific type of student who presents herself as "well-integrated" in Germany, given that she socialises in close proximity to German locals. However, the motivation of "integration" is closely related to Chinese identity: to demonstrate that Chinese students can "fit in" well in German society. Therefore, the Chinese identity of this type is very pronounced. At the same time, individuals in this type identify themselves strongly with the narrative of patriotic education in China. Members of this type make great efforts in order to change negative images of China. They believe that they have the obligation and responsibility to represent China positively and define themselves as people who successfully represent their country.

On the one hand, individuals in this type grow more attached to national sentiment while they stay in Germany. On the other hand, they also proceed with other changes through their transition, although carefully. Through personal contact and friendships, individuals of this type did change some of their views to some extent, but when something went against ideology they had previously learnt in China, they felt torn. Zhang's case represents a complex process of change in her choice of social contacts in Germany and in her sense of belonging. The analysis of this type offered me opportunities to reflect on the complexity of identity change and how it can vary according to the environment in which a person lives.

Studying in Germany, for this type, implies more than just the possibility of obtaining a master's degree; it is an opportunity to earn cosmopolitanism as a cultural capital[552], to be able to relocate oneself in the international context, and to find where one belongs in today's

[552] Hiroki Igarashi and Hiro Saito, "Cosmopolitanism as Cultural Capital: Exploring the Intersection of Globalization, Education and Stratification," *Cultural Sociology* 8, no. 3 (2014): 222-239, doi:10.1177/1749975514523935.

globalised world. This type regards the experiences of studying abroad as an international cultural capital, but their concept of being a "cosmopolitan" or "international" is still based on nation-states. In other words, nationality still serves as the primary reference framework in this vision. More specifically, this vision of a globalised world is China-centred. Therefore, although this type is "trying hard" to "fit in" to German society, they cannot feel a sense of belonging in the host culture or the transcultural space because of the limitations of their cosmopolitan imagination, and in return, their lack of a sense of belonging in Germany leads to a prominent loyalty to the Chinese nation.

8.2 Type B: The contented outsider/ observer

In the biographical trajectory of this type, individuals do not anticipate themselves being fully engaged in local life, but rather are content to keep their distance and observe the host culture as outsiders. Doing so provides individuals enough space for self-discovery and development. A cultural affiliation with China helps one to reconnect to one's roots while away from home and to find a sense of belonging abroad. This type was represented by Wang. In the following section I will present Wang's case based on a detailed case reconstruction.

8.2.1 Ethnographic experience

At the beginning of my fieldwork, in order to meet different Chinese students and potential interviewees, I became a regular participant in different activities at the university, such as international students' orientation programmes, the Chinese Spring Festival Gala, etc. Every year, the Chinese students' association organizes a Chinese Spring Festival Gala with various programs at the university. I met Wang during the preparation for the Spring Festival Gala in 2015. He was then a 25-year-old young man who was studying biotechnology. During the preparation, we became more familiar with each other. I invited Wang for an interview after the performance, and he agreed readily.

We had our first formal interview in a café in the city centre. Wang told me that it was his first time sitting in a café in Germany. I conducted six formal narrative interviews with

Wang during his stay in Germany, each interview lasting 2.5-3.5 hours. Wang did not talk too much when he was with other people, but he was very talkative during the interviews. He told me he liked the interviews because he did not have anyone whom he wanted to share with. He had also invited me to participate in his free time activities, such as meeting his friends, watching him play volleyball and Go with his teams, and watching his performance on a Chinese traditional instrument called a *guqin* in a workshop at the university.

8.2.2 Self-representation

After my initial question, Wang started his narration with "*I should describe myself as the only child in an academic family*." Following his opening sentence, he immediately added "*but it's not really intellectual at home because my parents didn't really read any books but played computer games, even though they always forced me to read when I was little. Maybe the outsiders think I have a good and stable family, but this family environment was nothing special and my earlier life might be therefore less interesting*." Wang located himself as the only child in the background of an academic family. He had a critical perspective on and distant attitude toward his family. Since he mentioned he was an only child explicitly, one could hypothesise that he might have enjoyed good care from his family but at the same time suffered from it.

Wang proceeded with his memory of being "rebellious" as a child. He reported to me that he used to lie to his parents and leave school early in order to play with his playmates. He also reported to me that he was once obsessed with electronic games and his mother found him in the electronic game room and slapped him in the face. I had the impression that he wanted to represent himself as someone who could rebel and lead an interesting life. Therefore, he particularly offered his "rebellious" stories, even though his rebellion happened rather rarely. Wang applied a present perspective here. He mentioned several times his "lost childhood" due to his parents, especially his mother, who took him to take additional classes on weekends in addition to regular classes in school. The thematic field was "childhood and youth under repression from parents."

After this representation, he moved to the theme that motivated him to study abroad. As a biology student, he was told by his father that it would be ideal if he could study in the US

because the subject of biology was the most developed there. However, then a studying-in-Germany program cooperated with his home university in China, which assisted students to study in master's programs in Germany. He made his first life decision: going to Germany for his master's study. He presented going to Germany as a turning point in his life, namely, an opportunity to set himself free from home as well as to embark on a process of self-discovery. The logic of his self-presentation can be analysed as showing that he wanted to introduce himself as someone who had been "repressed" by his parents and teachers, and eventually found a place to seek his true self by studying in Germany.

8.2.3 Reconstruction of Wang's life history

Family background and childhood

Wang, male, was born in 1990 in Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang Province in the northeast of China. Both of his parents worked in the universities in Harbin. His mother was a professor of Chinese pharmacy and his father was a professor of philosophy. His parents were high school classmates. Both were born in small towns and were the only university students in their families; they were then able to move to the city and start their careers.

One could expect Wang's parents might have paid much attention to their child's education, since he was the only child of first-generation of academics who had both have elevated their own social status via higher education. Since Wang was in kindergarten, his parents had taken him to different hobby classes, such as Chinese painting classes, music classes, Go classes, etc. When Wang was ten years old, in the third grade in 2000, he was attracted greatly by the electronic games on the market. Like many other pupils, he was forbidden to play the games by his mother because she was worried that he would waste time on them and that they would be a negative influence on him because his mother believed games were normally violent. In order to be able to play, Wang managed to sneak out to play with his classmates with the money he stole from his mother. His mother finally found this out and once found Wang in the game room and slapped him in the face out of anger. Wang narrated this story twice in our interviews. It seems this was an impressive memory for him in his childhood. Even though Wang denied that he was a rebellious child when he was little, he seemed to want to use the story to prove that his freedom in childhood was "repressed" by his parents.

After finishing primary school, Wang was ready to go to middle school. His parents had to contribute a big amount of financial aid to an elite school in order to guarantee a place for Wang. Since Wang's first day in middle school at 12 years old, in order to be competitive in the class, Wang was taken to have additional courses outside of school, which were aimed at helping pupils to learn the lessons ahead of the normal lessons. This meant that Wang would learn the curriculum content twice, the first time outside of school as additional lessons, and the second time in school. Wang remembered that, during the weekend, he would go with his mother and visit different tutors, literally "round the clock."

Wang's father studied philosophy in the university and worked first as a lecturer and then worked his way up to become the vice-director in a department. As someone who worked for the system, Wang's father criticised the system quite often. Wang's father was disappointed with the politics in China and with his own career, but had nowhere to talk about it, so he usually expressed his dissatisfaction at the dinner table, criticizing policies. Wang's private views regarding these topics were normally opposite to what Wang learnt in school.

In high school, Wang had a similar life but just with more pressure. He mentioned that he started to like volleyball but did not get time to practice it at all. The teachers would only offer a 20-minute lunch break for the students from 7 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock in the evening. In Wang's last year of high school, in order to help him to save more time on the road, his mother rented an apartment close to his high school and lived with him. Wang would only go home and visit during the weekend if he got free time.

Going to university

After all these years of hard work, Wang finally passed the university entrance exam with a good grade. His father made a decision for him to study biology. One of the biggest reasons was that he to send Wang abroad, and this subject made it easier to apply for schools overseas. In his second year of university, Wang was informed that his university offered a program of study in Germany for a master's degree. He later decided to embark on this journey of studying in Germany, which was especially supported by his father.

Arrival in Germany

In October 2013, Wang went to Germany, and he used the words "*subtle and fresh*" to describe his feelings. What worried him most was his financial situation. "*I wanted to reduce my expenses as much as possible. Now when I think about it, I was too stingy with money when I just came. For example, I didn't buy a water kettle, and just drank warm water from the tap. Especially with transportation, I didn't dare to go anywhere. I just stayed in my dorm, because the living expenses here are much higher, and it was so difficult to get used to it at the beginning*." This difference in price and sense of unaffordability was part of a sense of being "not at home." Even though the price of a water kettle was affordable for Wang de facto, he tried to save this money, because the place he stayed was for sleeping; it was not a place to feel at home and comfortable. Wang imagined himself as a sojourner, as "a guest passing by" (*guoke* 过客) in Germany. Everything was temporary, and he tried his best to accommodate the temporary life transition.

Feeling alone with freedom

The first semester break was difficult for Wang. He stayed home and played computer games; he realized that, living by himself, no one would care. He said it was "*unlike in the Chinese university,* [where] *there were always roommates who shared a room with you*." One of the biggest problems he experienced was loneliness. Back in his university in China, he had his best friends that he had met from among his classmates and roommates, as well as his volleyball team. In Chinese university dorms, a student is normally assigned to share one room with three to five students from their own class or with same major. "*If you are sick or get lazy, there is always roommates' help. But here you live by yourself completely. If I die in my room one day, I don't think Germans will ever notice it right away* [laugh]."

Joining a volleyball team and meeting Germans

In order to meet new friends, Wang started to look for interesting activities to join. Since Wang was very interested in volleyball, he found a university sports club recruiting new members. After playing for a semester, the team invited him to be the coach of the team because of his good techniques. He felt very flattered, even though sometimes he could not express himself in German, but with gestures and English he was able to make himself understood. Because of this, Wang improved his German and made several friends too.

During the process of getting to know locals better, Wang described his current status as an "exploring status": "*Sometimes I don't understand their facial expression and don't really know how to respond. I have read some introductory books about the German culture. But I don't think they are that useful. It's just stereotypes. I think they prepared you to be free from culture shock and let you not feel it's completely foreign when you land in this country. But the details about how you interact with others, the books didn't say. I think that takes time. I am relatively sensitive, and I care a lot about others' thoughts, so I am very cautious about communicating with them and I don't want to offend them.*"

Taking time and understanding himself

Wang slowly learnt how to enjoy the freedom, and he thought the best thing about studying in Germany is that he was able to reflect on himself. "*Living in Germany is really free; the space became enormous. Not like in China, where there were always eyes watching you. Here in Germany, I felt like I freed myself and understood myself better*."

"*People say once you go abroad, you will be more patriotic. Indeed, but when you are abroad, you start to think naturally how far China has been behind, and if what the media says was really the truth. One should think about the reason. In China, I wouldn't think too much. Whatever the communist party says is true, nothing is debatable. But now when I come to Germany, a controversial topic is so easy to be brought up. Like when people asked me 'Where do you come from?' I said 'China.' Then people asked me 'Which China'? That made me think why on earth they had put emphasis on this matter. Therefore, you have more motivation to understand more about it, and hope to change something strongly. Like people asked me why we can't use Facebook. This pushed me to understand the situation more actively. Now I read news more often than in China.*"

Wang considered himself an *observer* instead of a *participant.* He called his time in Germany an "exploring" process. After finishing his classes, he took a year in order to decide on his master's thesis topic. He told me that, if he were in China, he would not "waste time" like this, but now he felt it was a time that he could stop for a little bit and really think about what he wanted and where he would like to go. He specifically mentioned that "*lots of German youth take a gap year and travel around the world*." He called the year when he was deciding on his

master's thesis topic a gap year, even though he did not travel in real life, because he was taking the time to investigate what he really liked. He also told me that he was not sure if he would like to be a professor working in a research institute as his father told him he should do.

Learning China-related culture

While developing different perspectives, Wang also started to show more interest in Chinese culture and practices. He started to study Chinese medicine independently by looking at videos online and reading classical Chinese books on Chinese medicine. He also signed up for his city's Go club in Germany. Go is an ancient game of chess that is said to have originated in China. Wang took a Chinese fan with him when he went to his Go club, and he was the only Chinese player there. Later he became a player representing his city and participating in competitions in Germany. Furthermore, he started to practice Chinese calligraphy every day, which made him feel at home and satisfied. He said,

"When I came here [Go club]*, this environment made me feel a bit different. I have something which they* [Germans] *don't possess. I feel I am Chinese, and I can read Chinese classical poems and I can appreciate Chinese calligraphy and music, etc. I think I started to appreciate Chinese culture more."*

Final decision

Although Wang wanted to stay in Germany to carry on with his Ph.D., he did not find a place to study. At his mother's suggestion, he decided to go back to China for his Ph.D. studies. In May 2019, he was accepted as a Ph.D. student in his hometown, carrying out research combining his speciality in biology technology with Chinese traditional medicine.

8.2.4 Case structure and summary

Wang grew up in a first-generation academic family where education had been emphasised in a salient way. Wang had been given much pressure during his youth in school. Going abroad was originally suggested by his father, who believed in the freedom and high technology from the West, especially in the United States. However, since a program for studying in Germany

was set up already at Wang's university, Wang chose to study in Germany as an accessible alternative. When he arrived in Germany and encountered Germans, he did not feel that he completely "fit in." However, he was fine with being an outsider or an observer and learning new perspectives as a "stranger." He also participated in several Chinese-related clubs later in his stay in Germany, which provided him safe space where he felt he belonged. Through these Chinese-related activities, he seemed to have found his way of feeling at home in Germany. After his studies, he decided to go back to China although he would have liked to stay in Germany.

For Wang, there were two parallel developments. One was his personal development; he found that Germany offered him a comfortable space to reflect and expand upon himself. On the other hand, he found a way of belonging in Germany through investigating Chinese culture in Germany and also reflecting more on his Chineseness. He became more attracted to Chinese culture and found this touched his heart, and he felt connected to Germany more through Chinese culture associations. This passion also motivated him to seek a career as a scientist carrying out research on Chinese medicine.

8.2.5 The contented observer type

This type never defines themselves as a well-integrated type. Instead, individuals in this type define themselves as outsiders or "observers" from a distance (*guancha zhe* 观察者) in Germany. As for Simmel's "stranger," spatial proximity without an aspiration to membership grants individuals a specific intermediary cultural space.[553] Wang felt comfortable in Germany as an "outsider" or as a "passer-by." Because individuals of this type have more time and space for themselves to think about what it means to be Chinese, compared with Type A, individuals in Type B associate themselves with China more culturally rather than politically. Individuals in this type choose to join Chinese cultural activities because they feel that these activities really touch their hearts and ground them. They do not undertake these activities as a showcase of Chinese culture or of themselves as cultural delegates. Instead, individuals in this type use the opportunity to discover themselves while being in a different culture.

[553] Georg Simmel and Kurt H Wolff, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 402-408.

8.3 Type C: The potential global citizen

Type C's biographic trajectory seems on the other end of the spectrum from the previous types in terms of nationalism. Different from both Type A and Type B, this type of biographical trajectory, one seems to conceal or downplay one's national identity at the beginning but focus on experiences in a more cosmopolitan way. Different from Type B as an observer, this type is more active and takes responsibility for contributing to the local community. This type is represented by Hao. In the following section, I will present Hao's case following a detailed case reconstruction.

8.3.1 Ethnographic experience

Hao was the only participant in my study with whom I had contact before she decided to study in Germany. I met Hao first through the internet back in 2013, in a Baha'i community online. She was then working as a software engineer in a company in Nanjing. I introduced her to a German acquaintance who wanted to visit Nanjing and had asked if anyone local would like to accompany her; Hao readily accepted the request. We had had casual contact ever since.

In 2015, Hao told me that she would come to Germany for a master's program. I asked if she was interested in having interviews with me, and she accepted gladly. Since Hao and I both belonged to the Baha'i community in Germany, and there were not many Chinese Baha'is in Germany, Hao had more trust in me and assumed that I understood her situation better as an "insider." Therefore, she seemed to enjoy talking to me and supported my research project.

8.3.2 Self-Presentation

Different from other participants, Hao organised her narration mainly around the religious influence and inspiration of her intercultural experiences, which might partially be due to the initial contact we had had through the Baha'i community and partially be because she had just signed up for Baha'i membership in Germany a few days before our first interview. I was also fully aware that a researcher's personal biography may have a significant influence on the

outcome of an interview-based study; therefore, I was very cautious about my influence and tried my best to minimise its impact.[554] However, on the other hand, being a Chinese member of a German Baha'i community myself as well as a Ph.D. student in Germany was also beneficial for me when conducting the interview with Hao. My experience in this interview with Hao was similar to that of Naghme Naseri Morlock,[555] who is a first-generation immigrant and an Iranian Baha'i and conducted research about Baha'i refugees from Iran in the United States.

Hao started her self-presentation by saying: "*I think my story is quite different compared to other students, because I didn't come to Germany for my master study right after my graduation from China.*" She seemed to want to present herself as someone who was more mature than students who chose to study abroad right after graduation in China, without any work experiences. After this initial statement, she started to narrate the challenging process of her decision to study in Germany after two years of work experience as a computer programmer in China. She was tired of the routine and work overload. She wanted to go abroad, discover more of the world, and learn something new, despite the fact that she had to give up her job in China. She also especially emphasised that she had used her own savings to prepare for her studies abroad.

After providing me with the background of her decision process and motivation for studying abroad, she started to reflect on all the challenges and lessons that she had learnt from studying abroad so far, including social relations with classmates and her attitude toward the results of her studies as well as how to face problems during study. She regarded herself as someone who had more experience with society compared with students who had no work experiences.

Then Hao moved to the theme of how to become a global self, and also emphasised the importance of the Baha'i perspective, which had impacted her perception about becoming more open-minded and global. Her global identity was also reflected in her multiple names. On her social media profiles, such as WeChat and Facebook, she always used two names: one Chinese (Hao) and one Western (Claire). She had adopted her Western name from a character in an

[554] See Chapter Three for more information regarding the position of the researcher.
[555] Morlock, Naghme Naseri, "Trauma, Exile, and Identity: A Study of Iranian Baha'i Refugee Experience in the United States" (2015), Sociology Graduate Theses & Dissertations, 48. https://scholar.colorado.edu/socy_gradetds/48.

American TV series and had been using it since 2009.

8.3.3 Reconstruction of Hao's life

Family background and childhood

Hao was born in a small town in Jiangsu Province in the southeast part of China. Her mother worked as an English teacher at the local junior middle school in her village before her retirement, whereas her father had a small business. Despite coming from the countryside, Hao's mother's family was well educated. Both Hao's maternal grandfather and aunts worked as teachers. Hao's maternal grandfather had been persecuted because of his position as a teacher during the Cultural Revolution in the early 1970s.

However, Hao's parents did not have a good relationship. Hao remembered there was always conflict between her mother and father at home, and she did not like to be home. Instead, she enjoyed staying at the school where her mother worked. This childhood experience might also partially have shaped Hao's characteristics, since she did not hang out much with her peers but with her mother's students who were a few years older than she was.

Going to university

After finishing high school, Hao followed her mother's choice for her: going to university to study computer science. The program her mother chose was a program with double-degree cooperation between the United States and China. Students were supposed to study two years in the Chinese university and two years in the American university. However, Hao's father's business failed and went bankrupt. The relationship between Hao's parents also started to deteriorate and the marriage between her parents came to an end. Therefore, Hao's family could not afford the tuition for her to study abroad anymore.

Befriending an English teacher and learning about the Bahá'í faith

Hao became friends with her English teacher from Canada. Through frequent contact, she learnt that the teacher followed a religion called the Bahá'í faith. The religion started in Iran,

and Baha'u'llah is seen as the prophet of the faith by his followers worldwide.[556] Hao's English teacher was the first non- Chinese individuals with whom Hao had established a friendship. This friendship opened up her views and motivated her to communicate with more people from other places in the world and learn from them.

Boyfriend from Pakistan

Hao met her then boyfriend Ken from Nepal online in her third year of university. He was an international student at Nanjing University. Hao did not mention too much about her then boyfriend. The relationship lasted for a long time until Hao came to Germany. The parents of her boyfriend wanted to find a Muslim girl for him. After a long struggle, Hao had to break up with her boyfriend after she came to Germany. This was a difficult time for her. However, one can assume that this interracial relationship had an impact on Hao's international experience.

Work after graduation

After graduation, Hao found a job as a computer programmer in 2011. Since her mother had retired already and was alone at home, Hao invited her mother to stay with her for a week in Nanjing, and then her mother continued to stay with her. The divorce had a strong negative impact on Hao's mother, which led her mother to become emotionally dependent on Hao extensively. Witnessing the loss of love between her parents and the absence of a father figure, contributed to Hao becoming more responsible than her peers. She had to take care of her mother and also offer advice to her mother. This was a watershed event in her life that accelerated Hao's independence. Scholars about adolescents living in single-parent families have reported that these young people are more likely to be characterised by greater maturity, feelings of efficacy, and an internal locus of control. [557] Hao said, "*My mother and I are best friends. When people see us, they always said I was the little mother, and my mother was actually my daughter."*

Since Hao already spoke fluent English, she was sent to Indonesia and Brunei on her business

[556] For more detailed information about the Baha'i Faith, see Hatcher and Douglas Martin, *The Bahai Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*, 1st ed. (Baha'i Publishing, 2012).
[557] David H. Demo and Alan C. Acock, "The Impact of Divorce on Children," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 50, no. 3 (1988): 619, doi:10.2307/352638.

trip in 2013, which was the first time that she travelled abroad. During this trip, she met a colleague from Indonesia who had studied in Germany and suggested to Hao that she should consider studying abroad for a master's degree in order to increase her career potential.

Decision to study abroad for a master's degree

After the business trip abroad and the suggestion from her colleague, Hao started to consider continuing her original goal to study abroad. In the winter of 2013, she went to a study abroad agency and learnt that studying in Germany was affordable for her. Then she quickly started to prepare for all the documents and language classes/exams which were needed for the application, with the help from the agency, in 2018. It was not an easy process for Hao, since she had a full-time job at the same time. However, her efforts did not go in vain. In 2015, she successfully received acceptance letters from several universities in Germany. She chose an international cooperative program based in Germany, which meant that she needed to study in different countries within a two-year program.

Studying in Germany

Even though it was Hao's first time coming to Europe, she told me it was not very shocking or surprising to her: "*It's just the language on the signs on the street is different. The cities are cities. They are not that different from Chinese ones.*" Her class was half international students and half German students. She did not contact the Chinese community in her city. However, she soon realised that the class was clearly divided into two categories: European students, including German students, and other international students from non-European countries.

The study was not easy for her. She could not understand it at the beginning and cried a lot. She shared: "*The first semester I cried and until the last semester. Studying abroad is not an easy thing, especially in Germany*."

Signing up for membership as a Bahá'í in Germany and participating in local activities

In Hao's time of sadness after breaking up with her boyfriend, she contacted the Bahá'í community in Germany. Within the local community, she soon established good friendships with the local members. Her good friend the former English teacher, the one who had

introduced her to the Bahá'í faith, also came to visit her in Germany. After this visit, Hao decided to declare herself a Bahá'í and a member of the German Baha'i community in her second year of study in Germany. Hao said: "*This was a turning point for my life.*"

The personal relationship she had with a trusted English teacher and her family helped Hao overcome the initial "foreignness" of the Bahá'í religion. When asked about what in the Bahá'í faith attracted her, Hao explained it was the "global ideology" of the faith that helped her to overcome the difficulties that "the host of Islamic reference in Bahá'í scripture, the unpronounceable Persian names, and the introduction of ritual fasting and daily obligatory prayers all create boundaries to cross."[558]

Hao was warmly welcomed by the other members of the community. However, because of her limited capability in the German language, she could not fully participate in all the activities all the time. Nevertheless, she tried her best every time and always showed up at every gathering.

"Although I didn't know much German, it's already helpful to just be there for the community. I pray for our activities. Being there is already enough. And by being there, I have already learnt so much."

After a semester, Hao had already become very much involved in the local community. She believed she could also contribute to the local community. *"They included me as an organiser and helped me with the activity planning. They listened to what I thought and how I felt."*

She attended the Nineteen-Day Feast,[559] and Bahá'í holy day celebrations as well as attending a Bahá'í youth conference in Germany. This engagement in the activity of the local community kept her committed to her faith. More importantly, she also enjoyed the solidarity from the German community:

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[558] Michael McMullen, *The Baha'i: The Religious Construction of A Global Identity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 17.

[559] Members of the Baha'i community meet up at the first day of every month according to the Baha'i calendar, which is every 19 days. The meeting consists of three parts: devotional, administrative and social. The devotional part includes reading prayers and Baha'i writings; the administrative part is for members to discuss and consult on administrative matters; the social part is for members to socialise with each other.

"*This gave me meaning to my stay in Germany. I feel I belong because I am working with locals and I am helping the locals. I know I don't look like them, but I regard myself as one of them because I want to be a citizen of the world."*

She helped organise activities and perform singing, which helped her feel part of the community in Germany and feel at home. She introduced her international and Chinese friends to her Baha'i community and started to be a mediator or a "bridge" between her Chinese friends and German friends. The process of becoming a new member of a community "involves the construction of identities,"[560] and Hao at this time started to construct a new religious identity.

To better understand her construction of a new identity, it is necessary to examine the Bahá'í faith's theological approach to the normative dominance of the geopolitical nation-state and national identity. The religion encourages a cosmopolitan and globalist worldview that orientates believers as global citizens, and as such it questions the individual's sole loyalty to the nation-state.[561] The state-national forms of politics are therefore believed to be the "old world order" and obstacles to global unity. Instead, a unified world with diversity is one of the important goals of this belief.[562] Thus, for many Bahá'ís, placing a sense of national attachment second to attachment to the whole world as world citizens is consistent with a desire to serve humanity rather than their own country.[563] This vision is also reflected in a quote from Abdu'l-Bahá, one of the central figures in the Bahá'í faith: "To be a Bahá'í simply means to love all the world; to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for universal peace and universal brotherhood."[564]

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[560] Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 53.

[561] Cameron McAuliffe, "Unsettling the Iranian Diaspora: Nation, Religion and the Conditions of Exile," in *Identity and Exile: The Iranian Diaspora Between Solidarity and Exile*, ed. Heinrich Böll Foundation (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2015); Michael McMullen, *The Baha'i: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

[562] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), 42; Cameron McAuliffe, "Unsettling the Iranian Diaspora: Nation, Religion and the Conditions of exile," in *Identity and Exile: The Iranian Diaspora Between Solidarity and Exile*, ed. Heinrich Böll Foundation (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2015); Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974).

[563] Cameron McAuliffe, "Unsettling the Iranian Diaspora: Nation, Religion and the Conditions of Exile," in *Identity and Exile: The Iranian Diaspora Between Solidarity and Exile*, ed. Heinrich Böll Foundation (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2015).

[564] Quoted in J. E Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and The New Era: An Introduction to The Baha'i Faith* (Wilmette, Ill.: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2006).

Hao enjoyed specifically intellectual engagement with the Bahá'í global ideology. She quoted what she liked the most from the Bahá'í texts: "*It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens* [...] *This is my favourite quote from the Baha'i faith. I have to look at what I can contribute to this world* [...] *How can we transcend the differences and make the most of the diversity among us?"*

Furthermore, Bahá'í activities such as Bahá'í international conferences around the world and pilgrimage to Haifa also help foster an international network for believers. Many young believers travel worldwide to take part in international development projects, which also inspired Hao. In Hao's first local community in Germany, known for its Persian influence, half of the members were of Persian descent. McMullen argued that the level of racial and ethnic diversity in the Baha'i community is a product of its global ideology, which stresses the "oneness of humanity" and "unity in diversity."[565] Its institutional structures are flexible enough to incorporate local ethnic variation without losing their global orientation. Hao mentioned:

"*I found it so interesting that at the Feast we always ate Persian rice, and I had a feeling that my Chinese culture would be appreciated too*."

Hao participated in Baha'i activities and was the only Chinese member in the local community. In our interview, she repeated her identification as: "*I am a Baha'i first, then I am Chinese.*" She placed this religious identity, which stood for a global identity, before her national identity. Firstly, her experience with the Baha'i community in Germany expanded her identification as a Chinese person.

"I chose to be a Baha'i, and I can also choose to define myself as Chinese. I don't want people to tell me that I must be a Chinese first. I can be whoever I choose to be. I have to decide what is Chinese in me."

Secondly, the adoption of the Baha'i faith did not conflict with her Chinese identity. Instead, it

[565] Michael McMullen, *The Baha'i: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 17.

served as a source of confirmation of and connection with her Chinese identity in Germany. She was warmly welcomed as a Chinese person and her culture was celebrated, which helped foster pride in her Chinese heritage. On the other hand, the Baha'i faith also provided an alternative way for Hao to live in Germany:

"*My Baha'i friends here in Germany don't celebrate Christmas, which gives me a special feeling. Because the first year I felt left out since I didn't celebrate it either. I was thinking that I should celebrate Christmas in order to blend in. After I declared myself as a Baha'i and got to know that some Baha'i friends don't celebrate it either, I do not feel alone anymore."* The Baha'i tradition confirmed her way of life.

"*I don't like going to clubs and drinking very late, but I always felt I needed to drink in order to blend in. After I became a Baha'i, I could easily say I don't drink out of religious reasons, and my friends accept it and respect it. But before it's hard for me to say no. I still go to clubs with them sometimes, and I can be very happy too. But I don't feel the obligation to accept drinks anymore. I don't feel imposed. It suits my lifestyle*."

As someone with no previous affiliation with a particular religion who changed to a Baha'i adherence, Hao found a sense of belonging in Germany through her religious community. For Hao, the Baha'i faith provided her with meaning in a globalised world, and she was attracted by its worldview and ideology. Her identity as Baha'i sheltered from being alone in Germany and gave more power to her voice. She highlighted many times in our interviews how her involvement in the local Baha'i community had provided her with numerous opportunities to meet more local friends and practice her organizational skills.[566] "*I felt that being part of the Baha'i community really helps me to feel belonging here in Germany. I could practice my German language and organisational skills here in order to serve the local community better*."

A senior local member in her community adored Hao very much and wrote to her: "When I was a child, I would never imagine I could talk to a Chinese person, but now I have a special bond with you. We progress together." For Hao, the words were very touching and served as a source of empowerment for her as a foreigner in Germany. She started to feel that, as a Chinese

[566] Michele Lamont and Annette Lareau, "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments," *Sociological Theory* 6, no. 2 (1988): 156, doi:10.2307/202113.

person, she naturally brought a global aspect to a German community, which had an impact. She felt that she could contribute and make a potential change too.

According to Hao, teaching the faith is a necessity for a Baha'i life. She had confidence in sharing the worldview of the Baha'i faith with her contacts from university. These teachings include the unity of mankind, equality between men and women, and the unity of religions. She also became more interested in international news rather than only being interested in news from China, and she participated and helped organize activities for refugees in her city too.

What is more interesting is that Hao's mother also became a Baha'i because she was inspired by Hao. Hao's parents were born in the 1960s, and they were drawn into the Cultural Revolution in the period from 1966-1976, experiencing several times of despair and subsequent profound crises of belief. Despite the fact that mainland Chinese cannot register as members of the Baha'i faith in mainland China, Hao's mother was very active and organised various Baha'i activities in Nanjing. Hao kept close contact with her mother via WeChat every day, and their most common topics were Baha'i activities and exchanges of their understanding about the faith. They shared stories of things that had happened in different local communities too. Here, the Baha'i identity became a transnational identity for Hao that helped her connect to her mother too. It was a very important aspect shaping Hao's identity.

Decision to stay longer after graduation in Germany

After finishing her master's degree in two years, Hao decided to stay in Germany because she felt that she "*hasn't experienced Germany enough yet.*" She stayed in her institute and worked as a research assistant for six months before she decided to pursue Ph.D. studies in Germany. She received a position in a three-year Ph.D. program in another city in South Germany and moved there in April 2018. Regarding accommodation, unlike her first place to live in a student dormitory where she felt unsettled, she decided to make a change in the place where she stayed this time.

"*I am looking for a place more like home now. I didn't like the idea of spending money on the decoration of my room here in Germany when I was a master's student, because I didn't feel like it was my home and I didn't know how long I would stay. But now, I felt like I am going to be here much longer, and I feel I am already somehow part of this society here. I want to make*

the place more comfortable for myself and I can also invite friends to my home."

Hao started to have a deeper sense of belonging in Germany, even though she had just moved to a new city. However, the desire to make the place "home" became much stronger. Through the network of the Baha'i community, she moved into a room in a house owned by a local Baha'i friend in Ulm. She painted the wall of her room light green, as green was her favourite colour. She said, "*This truly feels home now.*"

Since Hao lived with a Baha'i family, she was more involved in the Baha'i activities and often she co-hosted activities at home with her landlord. At the same time, she kept close contact with her mother via WeChat, and sent money back every month to her father. She was worried about her father, who had no social insurance back in China since his business went bankrupt.

Romantic Relationships in Germany

Romantic relationships played an important role in Hao's life in Germany. It seems that Hao had more interest in building intercultural relationships. In October 2018, Hao and her mother travelled together for their pilgrimage to Haifa, Israel. There she met her boyfriend Hans, who was also Baha'i, and was participating in a service year there. Han's parents came from Germany, but he grew up in Mongolia, since his parents moved there 20 years ago. In March 2019 Hans finished his service in Israel and came back to Germany. Their relationship did not last long, but it was very important for Hao. At the time this study was completed, Hao was in a new relationship with a boyfriend from Greece.

8.3.4 Case structure and summary

Hao was born in a small town in the southeast of China. Hao's mother worked as a middle school teacher, and her father was a businessman. She grew up with her mother since her father was not always around. A bankruptcy led to the end of her parents' marriage and their final separation. Unlike most other Chinese students in this study, who went to a master's program right after a bachelor's program and were financed by their family, Hao decided to go abroad and study using her own savings after several years of work experience. Unlike many Chinese students who had never been abroad before studying overseas, Hao had already been on several

business trips abroad and had had a long-term interracial relationship with her ex-boyfriend from Pakistan. After working for four years, Hao finally decided to study in Germany. After experiencing a short period of loneliness in Germany, Hao made an important life decision: to become a Baha'i, a member of a not-so-common religious community. Since Baha'i advocates a global identity, Hao found herself deeply attracted to the faith. After signing up for membership, she found herself actively engaged in community life in Germany and discovered a new understanding of being a Chinese person and a "world citizen." She tried to seek a balanced position between being a Chinese citizen and a global citizen while living in Germany. After finishing her master's study, she decided to stay longer in Germany. She found a position in a Ph.D. program in a university. On her first pilgrimage trip to Haifa, Israel, Hao met her boyfriend Hans, who was a German Baha'i and grew up in Mongolia. After their breakup, she found a new boyfriend from Greece. At the end of this study, she was studying in her Ph.D. program until 2021.

8.3.5 The potential global citizen type

Members of this type already had several international contacts in their life course before going to study abroad. Individuals of this type see no contradictions between these two identities. Individuals of this type are "seekers" after truth in a globalising world. They have a worldview that celebrates diversity regardless of national, ethnic, or class distinctions. Local community activities provide individuals with a great opportunity to feel "belonging" in the local community in Germany. It is therefore relatively easier for this type to establish contacts and lasting friendships. These activities help them immerse themselves in the local environment and be able to contribute as part of the community.

This type partly resonates with Hannerz' notion of cosmopolitan lifestyles, which enable people to "go local" in different settings, finding their way into new cultural contexts and developing corresponding competences.[567] Members of this type have started to embrace a nascent form of cosmopolitanism. Still, this does not mean that they can move effortlessly without any need or wish to root themselves in specific local circumstances. In other words, joining the international community helps individuals of this type activate their "global self"

[567] Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990): 237–251.

in Germany and, through the local community, a sense of global identity offers them a solution for taking ownership of their sense of belonging in Germany. They primarily identify themselves as world citizens and have a clear cosmopolitan orientation. However, they are opening up to the possibility of a more cosmopolitan identity without completely discarding the need to feel close to their home country. Their Chinese identity is empowered and encouraged due to the global character of "diversity," because their "Chineseness" is highly valued and celebrated in a new cultural context.[568] In other words, holding a Chinese nationality in a multicultural milieu in which their "Chineseness" can be turned into a positive distinction and being a world citizen are ways for them to discover what Chineseness means to them in a globalised world. The strength of their enhanced cosmopolitanism and global vision is therefore emergent.

8.4 Summary of three typologies

These three case studies help us to see how participants' trajectories evolved. There are similarities and differences between these three cases. In terms of similarities, first of all, all of these three participants were born as the only child in a middle-class family where education had been given the highest priority as they grew up. Studying abroad as a good way to further their education had been supported by their families, especially by their mothers, either financially or emotionally. Secondly, they were all born after 1989 and grew up under the campaign of Patriotic Education, which had a great impact on their understanding of the relationship between themselves and their country. Thirdly, they had all faced similar challenges while studying in Germany alone, including learning the German language and adjusting to a different culture. However, they had developed different strategies and constructed different forms of identity while they lived and studied in Germany, and therefore the experience of studying in Germany had a different potential lasting impact on them too.

In terms of differences, first of all, these three types had developed different understandings of their "Chineseness." In the case of Type A, Zhang developed a strong allegiance to the Chinese state and was ready to defend it anytime, while the "100 years of humiliation" narrative

[568] Brian Hall, "Social and Cultural Contexts in Conversion to Christianity among Chinese American College Students," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 2 (2006): 131-147, doi:10.1093/socrel/67.2.131.

received from the Patriotic Education appeared to be weighty historical baggage for her too. In contrast, in the case of Type B, Wang started to discover his own relationship with his Chineseness in Germany through a cultural approach, such as joining a Chinese musical instrument club and a Go club. His participation in different Chinese cultural programs provided him with a space to experience a sense of belonging. These productions of Chineseness can be expressed in different forms. For example, Chineseness transpires as a form of political identity in the case of Type A but shows up as a form of authentic cultural identity in the case of Type B. Type C associates it with religious identity and finds a place of belonging in a religious community. She investigates a more "global self," which goes beyond her Chineseness.

Secondly, these different stories helped me comprehend various modes of "fitting into" places. "The decisive difference, after all, is not that between the 'well adapted' and the 'less adapted'; it is the difference between those for whom adaptation in a new cultural setting is not an issue at all, and those for whom it is."[569] Zhang in Type A was strong and goal-oriented in terms of establishing her friendships with the locals, by focusing on approval from the German community and disengaging from the Chinese community. However, this strategy did not necessarily provide her with a sense of belonging in Germany and her worldview did not substantially change either. Therefore, a constant "not-fitting-in" mindset haunted her despite the language skills and intercultural competence she acquired. Her effort and its lack of recognition left her with a sense of "not feeling secure in a place," which manifested itself in her belief about her "permanent racial visibility" in Germany.[570] In short, she was able to interact and connect with all sorts of socio-cultural contexts, but never fully felt comfortable in the environment. Zhang, in Type A, acquired tactical communication skills that enabled her to operate proficiently in two linguistic and cultural codes, but mere knowledge of language and culture was not enough as it did not translate successfully into a transcultural awareness or a global worldview. She still felt indebted and has a sense of not belonging to the local community. Furthermore, although she regarded cosmopolitanism as an important form of cultural capital, her vision of cosmopolitanism was still centred in China.

Wang, in Type B, instead found a fit with his own being in the new culture by increasing and

[569] Willem Schinkel, "Against 'Immigrant Integration': For an End to Neocolonial Knowledge Production," *Comparative Migration Studies* 6, no. 1 (2018), doi:10.1186/s40878-018-0095-1.
[570] Ang, 1998.

expanding his experiences, abilities, and possibilities. He was not so much concerned with how to integrate positively into Germany as he was with discovering possibilities for places and situations where could fit in with his own personality in order to expand his experience and his enjoyment of studying and living abroad. If one juxtaposes Type A and Type B, one finds different ways of adapting to life in Germany and different senses of belonging. As Phillip Mar concluded in his paper, the less international students invest in a foreign country, the "lighter" their commitment to their host country and the less they need to adapt to a place and change themselves into an "other" way of being.[571] Unlike Zhang in Type A, Wang in Type B defined himself as an "outsider" and a "stranger" to German social circles and he felt content with this, rather than feeling that he had to fit into a place. On the one hand, it seems that Wang deliberately distanced himself from established relationships. He found a position where he felt comfortable in a "vacuum space" in Germany where he could commit to his personal exploration. This position reflects what Janett termed "constructive marginality."[572] This means even though Wang seemed to be in a marginal position in his social networks in Germany, he took an active role in constructing this position; it was a deliberate rather than a forced choice.

On the other hand, the choice to be an outsider or a stranger did not necessarily mean that Wang was completely isolated. Individuals in Type B identify themselves as different and marginalised yet use this experience constructively. In line with Simmel's theory, "to be a stranger is naturally a very positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction [...]. He [the stranger] is not radically committed to the unique ingredients and peculiar tendencies of the group, and therefore approaches them with the specific attitude of 'objectivity.' But objectivity does not simply involve passivity and detachment; it is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement."[573] Therefore, Wang's conscious decision to stay as different, or an outsider holding a marginal position, allowed him to "question" and also to challenge the "desirability of conventional meanings of home and belonging."[574] This echoes what Hayes' belief that "home becomes defined no longer as a

[571] Phillip Mar, "Accommodating Places: A Migrant Ethnography of Two Cities (Hong Kong and Sydney)" (PhD diss., The University of Sydney, 2002), 266.
[572] Janet Marie Bennett, "Cultural marginality: Identity issues in intercultural training," in *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, ed. Ricard Michael Paige (Yarmouth: Intercultural Press,1993),109–135.
[573] Georg Simmel and Kurt H Wolff, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 402-408.
[574] Helen, Hayes, "(Be)Coming Home: An Existential Perspective on Migration, Settlement and the Meanings of Home," *Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis*, (2007), Vol. 18 Issue 1, 2-16, 15.

physical location, but rather as an inner sense of personal authenticity and purpose, and living out of one's freedom and one's commitment to one's self-development."[575]

Different from both Type A and Type B, Hao in Type C had a diverging attitude when it came to "fitting into" German society. The Baha'i faith, which Hao followed, believes in the need for humanity to find a unified social future, and it holds that unity among all people, regardless of race, religion, or background, is not only a necessity but an inevitability. Compared to Type B, who takes a marginal position in the host society, Type C takes a more active role to be part of the local religious community. Type A prefers to establish local contacts to gain intercultural capital and therefore becomes a tactical intercultural individual, by which I mean Zhang's intercultural capacity was based on a tactical form of translation of linguistic and cultural codes. However, both Type A and Type B only had a sense of "attachment" to German society, whereas Hao, in Type C, by attending and organising Baha'i activities in the local community, gained a great opportunity to feel "belonging" to the local community in Germany through "membership" in an institutionalised religious community. Her volunteer work and her membership in the religious institution helped Hao in Type C to be closer to the local community and find a place in the host society as something more than as an "outsider." This provided her an opportunity to get to know more German and international friends. These activities helped her immerse herself in the local environment and be able to contribute to the community as a co-creator. This partly resonates with Hannerz' notion of cosmopolitan lifestyles, which enable people to "go local" in different settings, finding their way into new cultural contexts and developing corresponding competences.[576] Unlike Type A, who develops a strong loyalty to the Chinese state, partially due to a lack of a sense of belonging in Germany despite all the local friendships she established and the intercultural skills she acquired as a form of cultural capital, Hao in Type C started to embrace a different form of cosmopolitanism without feeling a loss or emphasis on her "Chineseness." This kept her at the other end of the spectrum of identity change.

[575] Ibid.
[576] Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990): 237–251.

Chapter 9 Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

In this last chapter, I would like to summarise this study in the following five sections. First, I will review the main findings of the research and answer the questions posed in the introductory section of this thesis; second, I will emphasise the study's contribution to the current knowledge about Chinese students overseas and the understanding of Chinese identity and identity theory itself; third, I will present the pedagogical significance that I hope will be of use to host institutions and international students in host countries; fourth, I will propose directions for future research; and finally, I will bring the study to a close with my personal reflections.

9.2 Answers to the research questions

The research questions guiding this study were: Did the students in this study change in terms of their identity while they studied in Germany? If so, then how? In order to answer the central question, three sub-questions were posed.

Answer to Research objective 1: What motivated the students to study in Germany and how did they imagine Germany before leaving China?

The data in Chapter Five presented the salient features perceived by the participants about Germany. It showed the participants' motivation for studying abroad and their perceptions about Germany. Most of the participants held favourable and sometimes even exaggeratedly rosy perceptions about Germany or Western society before their arrival in Germany. Some of their uncritical admiration strongly influenced their expectations and thus influenced their experiences in Germany.

Answer to Research objective 2: What have the students experienced and how did they negotiate with their social contacts in terms of an identity and a sense of belonging in Germany?

The data in Chapter Six suggest that students had several social experiences with co-national

networking, with Germans, and with international students. The study showed the social experiences of Chinese student participants in different communities. They used different strategies as they learnt to negotiate in the new cultural environment. In confirming of Bochner's theorem, the majority socialised within the Chinese student community and had difficulties socialising with local German students, while the international student community served as a buffer zone for these Chinese students.

Answer to Research objective 3: What changes have they experienced and how did these changes happen and develop?

As shown in Chapter Seven, the students' experiences brought about changes and development of their understanding of Chineseness. The Chinese students' sense of belonging in Germany was fashioned by their intercultural experiences and their negotiation of the meanings of Chineseness as well as their attachment to it while in Germany. Here I would like to use "transplantation," a botanical metaphor, to refer to the relocation process of my interview partners. If the plant has been in a pot for a long time, its roots will wrap around the soil and are shaped by the container. When the gardener transplants the plant, he or she needs to tease out the tips of the roots in order to help the roots to grow outward into the surrounding soil. The previous shape of the roots will also change to adapt to the new container, but the contact might also bring about "transplant shock." On the one hand, the impact of the Patriotic Education the students had received in China partially shaped who they were and how they felt in the "Chinese" container. The findings of this study revealed that the Patriotic Education, with its core content based on the history of the "century of humiliation," has constructed a "designated Chineseness" for China's young generation. This was a historical burden for some participants, which influenced their experiences in Germany.

On the other hand, when the students studied abroad in Germany, this brought another kind of experience that potentially would constantly be in tension and collide with these students' previous education received within China from childhood. This result echoes what Wilson found in his study, that the life of young Chinese students in Germany can be a formative experience, especially when they experience life in Germany in a very different way than they

do in China.[577] Students therefore need to be brave and wise enough to tease out the tips of their roots and to grow outward into the surrounding soil in order to survive and thrive in the new cultural setting.

The experience of my participants in Germany demonstrated that identity change and reconstruction in a transcultural context can be a complex process. Transcultural interactions and diversified perspectives led some of the students to shift or challenge their previous national loyalty and sense of geographic belonging. The students were engaged in a constant process of non-linear negotiation and change. Therefore, it is impossible for them to study and live in Germany without noticing some aspects of life that they previously took for granted in their daily intercultural interactions. Their changes and shifts showed that various elements of identity, such as political identity, ethnic identity, cultural identity, etc., are woven together in transcultural interactions too. It is also important to point out that the difficulties encountered by the Chinese students in this transition process were not things to be avoided. On the contrary, these challenges should be seen as necessary for students to explore a deeper and more sophisticated sense of global belonging to the world.[578]

The students in this study immerse themselves in a new culture, and, based on the biographical data in this study, some experienced several subtle changes:
1. These changes were manifested in daily routines such as name use, language use, eating habits, etc.
2. Some students changed their political stance toward the Chinese regime. Some developed stronger political allegiance while others started to care more about minority political rights and to gain a different understanding of German politics.
3. As emerging adults, the participants in the study went through a journey of self-discovery.
4. Many students experienced various changes in their sense of belonging. Some participants developed a stronger attachment to Chinese society whereas some were caught in an "in-between" status. Some participants felt at ease about this situation, and some felt confused.
5. Some students also changed their perception regarding Germany and Germans.
6. Many of the participants developed an new understanding of "Chineseness" ethnically,

[577] Iain Wilson, "Does International Mobility Change Chinese Students' Political Attitudes? A Longitudinal Approach," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 21, no. 3 (2016): 321-337.
[578] Chris R. Glass, "International Students' Sense of Belonging—Locality, Relationships, and Power," *Peer Review* 20, no.1 (2018): 27-30.

politically or culturally.
7. All these also resulted in changes of many students' decisions about what to do upon graduation in Germany.

Therefore, to the central question "Do Chinese master's students change their identity during their time abroad?", I would like to give a positive answer that this group of participants did change. The experiences of these students seem to have expanded, if not completely transformed, their identities and sense of belonging. Furthermore, I would characterize the experiences of these Chinese students in Germany as an interplay between continuity and change, where continuity and change interact, clash, negotiate, and reconcile. However, I am very cautious about making claims about the generalizability of the research results, as this study was not aimed to fully capture every experience of all Chinese students abroad. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that other Chinese students may also experience similar possibilities for change, and the findings have the potential to serve as a theoretical and practical reference for similar educational settings.

9.3 Contributions to the current literature

9.3.1 Contribution to the knowledge of Chinese students abroad

This study challenges the fact that many of the current research on Chinese students generally treats Chinese students as a homogeneous community. I argue that the young post-1990s Chinese generation is a distinct group, given the environment it has been raised in. The biographical narratives of the Chinese students that I collected in my research were an attempt to present a more complex image and a range of divergent narratives of their experiences rather than seeing them as a uniform group. The analysis of this research about Chinese master's students in Germany helps fill the large gap in the literature around the changing process of their identity and sense of belonging on their journey to the "West," more specifically to Germany.

I especially addressed the importance of the Patriotic Education Campaign because, as presented in Chapter Four, it helps the state to demarcate its frontiers and standardize a "Chinese identity." Loyalty to the state, for many of the Chinese students interviewed, was so

deeply rooted and intertwined with Chinese perceptions that it was difficult to untangle, and this loyalty became a starting point for understanding "self" and "other" when these students studied abroad.

9.3.2 Contribution to the understanding of Chineseness

The research also raises questions: Is Chinese identity personal, national, racial, cultural, or political? Does it migrate or become malleable or transmuted? What is authentic, sacred, kitsch?[579] Who gets to define these concepts? Is it ever possible or necessary for these young people to relearn or unlearn their Chinese identity when they go abroad?

I have argued that Chineseness is diverse rather than bound by fixed categories. This continually changing identity process reflects the conflicting discourses of Chineseness as a racial, cultural, and nationalist identity.[580] Through their experiences in Germany, some participants discovered multiple meanings that could not be encompassed by universal definitions of "Chineseness." The negotiation of Chineseness can also be complicated by some "taken-for-granted" forms that are ascribed to young people, especially through the Patriotic Education Campaign. The term "Chinese" itself as a category is often used unproblematically as a term to describe a supposedly monolithic group, erasing generational and linguistic diversity, socioeconomic and geographic differences, and diverse migration trajectories across the lifespan.[581]

Studying abroad provides Chinese students a great opportunity for an open negotiation of their Chineseness. Some participants in Germany started to question the "taken-for-granted" norms of their entangled "Chineseness" and diversified their understanding of it.[582] This echoes Ang's point that the reality of "Chineseness per se is not a static essence."[583] Likewise, Chun argued that "the very nature of identity as a selective process in the mind of individual subject-

[579] Wing Young Huie, *Chinese-Ness: The Meanings of Identity and the Nature of Belonging*, 1st ed. (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2018).
[580] Andrea Louie, *Chineseness Across Borders* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
[581] Gregor Benton and Edmund Terence Gomez, *The Chinese In Britain, 1800-Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[582] Agnes May Lin Meerwald, "Chineseness at the Crossroads," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4, no. 4 (2001): 387-404, doi:10.1177/136754940100400402.
[583] Ien Ang, "Migrations of Chineseness: Ethnicity in The Postmodern World," *Mots Pluriels* 1, no. 7 (1998), http://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP798ia.html.

actors grounded in local contexts of power and meaning makes the possibility of 'Chinese' identifying with a common discourse a hopelessly impossible task."[584] This is also in line with Ang's view that a so-called Chinese identity is invariably fabricated, and thus malleable and fluid. In other words, this identity may be claimed, politicized, and mobilised by various people for various purposes, and therefore it is possible for it to be "simultaneously affirmed and undone."[585]

What it means to be Chinese is directly related to making sense of the students' experience in Germany in this globalised world. If Chineseness is seen as processual rather than inherent, "the contingency of both civic and ethnic nationalisms becomes clear."[586] This is in line with what Allen Chun's argument that the fact that "cultural narratives differ in different Chinese political contexts is a testament to the possibility of different interpretations and political uses of Chineseness."[587] This serves to remind us of the complexities that young Chinese students abroad face in the production, consumption, interpretation, and negotiation of discourses about "Chineseness."

9.3.3 Contribution to the understanding of a sense of belonging and identity

In exploring the development of participants' sense of belonging and of changes in their identity, this study confirmed the previous theory that identity change is a dynamic process. It seems almost impossible to locate identity, but we can always try to observe it from different dimensions, as I suggested in Chapter Two. As Monhanty reminds us, rather than simply celebrating or dismissing the various uses of identity, a rich theory of identity explains how and why identities are problematic, and where and why they enhance or diminish capabilities.[588] Norton defined identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person

[584] Allen Chun, "Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity," *Boundary* 2 23, no. 2 (1996): 130, doi:10.2307/303809.
[585] Ien Ang, "The Differential Politics of Chineseness," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 22, no. 1 (1994): 74, 79.
[586] Chris Vasantkumar, "What is This 'Chinese' in Overseas Chinese? Sojourn Work and the Place of China's Minority Nationalities in Extraterritorial Chinese-ness," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 2 (2012): 423-46.
[587] Allen "Fuck Chinese," 116.
[588] Satya P. Mohanty, "Identity Politics," *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory* 3, no. (2010), doi:10.1002/9781444337839.wbelctv3i001.

understands possibilities for the future."[589] Along with this process of change and transformation, the maturity and interculturality of young students is improving, enabling them to see, understand, and live from a new sense of self and use it to function effectively in their host and home countries.[590]

Firstly, based on the data I collected in this research, the identity of being Chinese is well established on boundaries between "us" and "them."[591] It is a boundary that "justifies" mythologizing others. It is possible that othering creates the other as a mirror, but this means that once the situation reveals itself as a case of othering, the interpreter/self can begin to see itself in this mirror. In other words, knowing the Other is a process of self-cultivation. Thus, by confronting the Other, the interpreter also learns to understand himself or herself better. It turns out that understanding oneself not only facilitates understanding of the other, but becomes a prerequisite for understanding the other, although the former can only be achieved through confrontation with the other.[592]

Secondly, this research was also aimed to advance the understanding of transcultural identity, which potentially transcends the duality between "self" and "other." "The international mind," a certain ideal intercultural personality that is at ease in another cultural space, enables people to play an active role in the new cultural space because they have acquired the ability to move from one space to another or to navigate freely in different spaces. There are different models of intercultural identity. Some of the Chinese students in this research who had have experienced personal as well as authentic relatedness with Germans and other international contacts had learned to leave behind their tendency to see non-Chinese as disconnected others, were able to transcend the boundaries of language and culture, and most importantly, could discard the simple dichotomy between "China" and "Germany" or East and West. For other students, this nascent form of cosmopolitanism only represented a cultural capital that still centred nation states, and more specifically centred China. The young generation needs this relatedness in this global world and must work for a more connected future, instead of hardening already existing boundaries. Students' overseas experiences should be of help to

[589] Yoonkyung Kecia Yim and Bonny Norton, "Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity and Educational Change," *TESOL Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2001): 504, doi:10.2307/3588036.
[590] Qing Gu, "The Impact of Study Abroad on The Student Self," *University World News*, January 19, 2012, https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20120125130734992.
[591] Charles Tilly, *Identities, Boundaries, and Social Ties* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2005), 131-52.
[592] Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeune, *Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2010), 30.

reconceptualizing the boundaries between "us" and "them," and to acknowledge that "them" is no longer the exotic, mystifying, inexplicable other, but something to be learned and internalized until it becomes part of one's own knowledge and experience of the world.[593]

The students in this study also started to view people in a more individual way instead of as general stereotypes. This emerged from the process of navigating their own identity as a Chinese student in Germany. Following Levitt and Schiller, I would like to point out again one thing that makes "belonging" slightly different from "identity": the sense of belonging is not as "hard" as identity; it is not an "either-or" demarcation between categories, only one of which a person can attach to. On the contrary, it seems as if transnational individuals have the potential to process double or multiple belongings and combine new and old attachments to places with transnational ties.[594]

However, transcultural ties do not necessarily imply successful fusion. Scholars like Canclini and Hannerz, emphasised the element of hybridisation in terms of a successful transcultural fusion. The essential elements of a transcultural identity should include hybridity, or in-betweenness.[595] As Ang conceptualized it, hybridity or in-betweenness "*confronts and problematizes boundaries, although it does not erase them. As such, hybridity always implies an unsettling of identities. It is precisely our encounters at the border–where self and the other, the local and the global, Asian and Western meet– that make us realize how riven with potential miscommunication and intercultural conflict these encounters can be. This tells us that hybridity, the very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of happy, harmonious merge and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution. In other words, hybridity is a heuristic device for analysing complicated entanglement.*"[596] Only through the acceptance and celebration of hybridity can transcultural identities become a possibility instead of a wishful thinking.

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[593] Longxi Zhang, "The Myth of the Other: China in The Eyes of the West," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (1988): 108-131, doi:10.1086/448476.
[594] Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, "Transnational Perspectives on Migration: Conceptualizing Simultaneity," *International Migration Review* 38, no. 3, (2004): 1002–1039.
[595] Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
[596] Ien Ang, "Together-In-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, into Hybridity," *Asian Studies Review* 27, no. 2 (2003): 149-150, doi:10.1080/10357820308713372.

Thirdly, the experiences of the Chinese students in Germany revealed that a fixed conception of sense of belonging and home needs to be consciously interrogated and a more flexible one is in need. To what extent does a sense of belonging depend on relationships with significant others, and to what extent does it relate to specific geographic locations? A sense of alienation and estrangement often characterised the participants' experiences abroad, but experiences of displacement evoke fundamental questions about sense of belonging and identity. Echoing what Rapport and Dawson have stated, I found in this study that a clearer understanding of an enhanced sense of self emerge more strongly after a dislocation occurs. Rapport and Dawson called attention to the "paradox" that one may only attain an ultimate sense of belonging through "transience" and "displacement."[597]

Kateb argued that there is a positive quality to alienation.[598]Alienation means creating some distance from one's immediate and familiar lived experience to see oneself from a distance, and thereby to acquire a quality of self-examination and self-knowledge. Being away from home physically is precisely the condition that enables the development of this mental or spiritual alienation. Changes in the meaning of home and the development of the self are deeply intertwined because being at home, in this sense, is to be fixed in time, place, and identity. At home, we have a clear and even obvious answer to the question of where we are and who we are. However, being away from home might provide us the freedom to create ourselves anew through constant changes.

One can understand that it was the experience of being away from home that forced the Chinese students in this study to leave their "self-assurance" and required them to negotiate multiple meanings of and relationships with home, as a fundamental task of such experiences is to work towards some sense of home amidst the uncertainty of mobility while away from home. How did these studying abroad experiences mediate the participants' sense of belonging or, conversely, of alienation? "Home […] is where one best knows oneself."[599] In this sense, Germany might be seen as a new "home" for the participants, since it became a place where they grew to know themselves better.

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[597] Rapport Nigel and Andrew Dawson, "The Topic and the Book," in *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement*, ed. Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson (Oxford, Berg:1998), 9.
[598] George Kateb, *Emerson and Self-Reliance* (Lanham:Rowman&Littlefiled Publishers, Inc, 1995).
[599] Rapport Nigel and Andrew Dawson, "The Topic and the Book," in *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement*, ed. Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson (Oxford, Berg:1998), 9.

Furthermore, if the traditional understanding of a sense of belonging is a desire for home that is regressive and nostalgic, my participants' experiences in Germany taught me a more flexible conception of belonging that is creative and future-oriented, while they allowed me to redefine "home as place" as "home as interaction."[600] The results revealed that "to belong is to act as an investor, owner and creator of this place."[601] Therefore it is not only important but necessary for Chinese students to become willing to own up to their contributions in the host country while they are looking for a sense of "home." In this way, young people can reconstruct a new identity and sense of belonging away from home. As Hall famously argued, cultural identity is not only a matter a "being" but of "becoming," "belonging as much to the future as it does to the past."[602] For these Chinese students in Germany in my research, living the paradox of home was expanded further to include not only their significant relationships with past and present, and people and places, but also their fundamental relationship with themselves and the unfolding of theirs future purpose in life.

Having, or rather gaining, a sense of belonging can be also described as a process of becoming one's true self. The test of whether one feels "at home" is no longer the familiarity of the place, or even the quality of one's relationships with others, but whether one feels that such a lifestyle is consistent with one's ultimate sense of purpose in life.[603] "The process of (be)coming home to ourselves is one of continually creating and recreating home within ourselves and between ourselves and others. Home might always contain elements of our *having been*, but its main significance lies in our *becoming*."[604] The Chinese students in this study, who belonged to a particular Chinese culture, transformed to gain a more transcultural or global sense of belonging and discovered "self" even far from "home" in Germany. No matter whether these students ultimately went back to China, stayed in Germany, or pursued their lives in other places in this world, their changes and transnational experiences in Germany would not only facilitate their own growth and development on the way to "becoming," but would also potentially have an impact on their future education of a "second generation of international mobility" in their own families.

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[600] Greg Madison, "Existential Migration," *Existential Analysis,* 17, No.2 (2006): 239.
[601] Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco, Calif.: Berrett-Koehler, 2009).
[602] Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who needs Identity?" in *Questions of Cultural Identity* ed. Stuart Hall, Paul du Gay (London, Sage: 1996), 1-17.
[603] Helen Hayes, "(Be)Coming Home: An Existential Perspective on Migration, Settlement and The Meanings of Home," *Journal of The Society for Existential Analysis,* 18, no. 1 (2007): 2-16.
[604] Ibid.

9.4 Pedagogical implications

Besides its theoretical significance, this research also attempted to have significance on the practical level. This thesis aims to provide advice to Chinese students studying and living or planning to study abroad, as well as to host institutions abroad, in particular their international offices. On the one hand, it provides practical insights into the adaptation of Chinese students and helps to reiterate that Chinese students planning to study abroad should be adequately prepared before leaving China. This preparation should include intercultural training and the ability to think beyond the binary of we/them or multiple/minority. On the other hand, host universities should also provide more space for international students to share their stories and help them recognize their own changes and development. Activities and programs organized by the host university aimed at fostering a sense of belonging among international students, as well as more guided and meaningful engagement with local students and local residents, would help to provide emotional and instrumental support to Chinese and other international students.

Furthermore, a challenge to the institution structure is also needed, since adaptation is not always "one-way" street that is just a matter of "individual responsibility" and asks only the international students to change. The university needs to develop too, especially by understanding international students more individually instead of thrusting them into several simple stereotypes. Universities should be able to provide all students, including both domestic and international students, a safe place for building mutual communities and dismantling various stereotypes. A multicultural environment does not guarantee the deconstruction of a narrow mindset nor intercultural communication skills. Domestic students should also be given opportunities to show more interest in the outside world where they learn to welcome Others rather than believing that they need to protect themselves from Others or only showing indifference. When one believes that the Others are the problem and that transformation is required of them and not of oneself, one becomes the beneficiaries of the others' suffering in the world.[605] Educational institutions should play an active role in encouraging both domestic and international students to be more open minded and offer them platforms for potential mutual understanding.

[605] Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009).

9.5 Future directions for research

During the course of my study, some additional, but particularly interesting, reflections emerged that I wish I could have examined in this research, but I did not have the capacity to do so: Firstly, the data heavily relied on the students' own accounts of their experiences in Germany without much data from their German counterparts, for example, their German friends, lecturers, etc. Inclusion of the German and international friends of these Chinese students would also be highly interesting since it would offer another perspective on the Chinese students' experiences in Germany.

Secondly, since I only included Chinese students from mainland China, it would be intriguing to include students from other locations, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Singapore, in order to have different perspectives regarding "Chineseness." Furthermore, focusing on ethnic minority groups from Chinese territory, such as Uygur students from Xinjiang who studied in Germany with Chinese passports, would also be worthy of note. During my pilot study, I met one Uygur student from Xinjiang, who came to Germany to study economics. I carried out one successful biographical interview with him, but he politely refused my followed-up interviews invitations. Due to the lack of further information and the scope of my study, I had to focus on the experience of Han Chinese students, but further studies on ethnic minority students from China will problematize the "Han-centralism" of this type of study.

Thirdly, since this study was contextualized in Germany, it would be interesting to compare the adaptations and changes of Chinese students who study abroad in different countries. Do their changes reflect the culture of their host countries, or do they share a universal pattern? However, this would have required more time and financial aid, which I was unfortunately unable to manage at the time.

Finally, it would be also interesting to look at this topic from a gendered perspective, for example to narrow down it to female Chinese students abroad. In the study, I encountered situations with gender differences, for example, the romantic life of students in Germany. I would be intrigued to investigate more about how gender plays a role in Chinese students' lives in Germany, or abroad in general, in the future.

9.6 Epilogue: My own changing identity and sense of belonging in the research

As I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, this research was also motivated in part by my personal interests. Thus, completing this dissertation has meant going on a long journey that has given me some insight into my own ongoing changes of identity and sense of belonging as well. My research has also inspired and shaped me. It has helped me to stand outside my comfort zone and constantly monitor my self-presentation, and it has given me a greater academic awareness and personal empathy for myself and my friends living abroad. For the past six and a half years, I have been trying to understand more about where I really belong, what home is and where it is, while being away from home. The study found that young Chinese students face difficulties and challenges while experiencing various changes as they search for a sense of belonging overseas. But at the same time, it reminded me that in a world transformed by mobility, it is these changes and shifts that provide us with the opportunity to rethink the meaning and purpose of our lives, whether they are significant or subtle, as they push us to discover ourselves and our relationship with home along the way.

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Appendix I

Table 1: Demographics of participants from interviews

Participant code	Gender	Year of birth	Hometown	Major field of study
M1	M	1987	Beijing	Mathematics
M2	M	1992	Nanjing	Law
M3	M	1990	Longyan	Sociology
M4	M	1991	Shanghai	Political science
M5	M	1990	Harbin	Biology
M6	M	1991	Beijing	Political science
M7	M	1991	Fuzhou	Computer science
M8	M	1990	Xi'an	Business economics
M9	M	1991	Wuhan	Computer science
M10	M	1991	Hefei	Sociology
M11	M	1992	Hohhot	Agriculture
M12	M	1991	Hangzhou	Intercultural German studies
M13	M	1989	Guiyang	English literature
M14	M	1992	Guangzhou	Agriculture
M15	M	1992	Kunming	Engineering
F1	F	1992	Nanjing	Law
F2	F	1991	Chengdu	Geology
F3	F	1992	Shanghai	Intercultural German studies

F4	F	1992	Kaifeng	German literature
F5	F	1993	Beijing	Sinology
F6	F	1990	Mianyang	Intercultural German studies
F7	F	1990	Haikou	Political science
F8	F	1991	Qingdao	Sinology
F9	F	1988	Jiujiang	Engineering
F10	F	1990	Kaifeng	German literature

Appendix II

External interview question guide

Life story

1. How old are you?
2. Where is your hometown?
3. What are your parents' occupations?
4. Do members of your family have international contacts? Have they travelled or lived abroad?

Preparation before studying in Germany

5. Which university did you go to in China? What did you study?
6. How did you decide to study abroad, especially in Germany?
7. How did you prepare yourself for studying abroad, especially in Germany, e.g. foreign language competence; university application process?
8. Had you travelled abroad before? If so, what was your experience?
9. Does your family support your study in Germany?
10. How do you finance your study in Germany?
11. What images did you have of Germany?
12. What did you expect from the experience of studying in Germany?

Life in Germany

13. What was your impression when you first arrived?
14. What are your living conditions? (e.g. single studio; shared flat; living with host family) If you live in a shared accommodation, with whom do you share it?
15. How many acquaintances/friends did you make and how did you meet them? What are their ethnicities or cultural backgrounds?
16. What type of contacts do you have with your acquaintances and friends? How often do you meet each other and what activities do you do together?

17. Which local activities do you participate in? How regularly do you participate? (e.g. sports; cinema; theatre; concerts, etc.)
18. Have you travelled around in Germany/ Europe? What has been your experience?
19. Do you read/watch/listen to the news? Which platform or media do you normally use to obtain your resources?
20. How often do you contact home and visit family and friends back in China? What have been your experiences?

Summary and future plans

21. How do you feel about living in Germany in general, compared to living in China?
22. Have some of the images you had of Germany changed?
23. Have some of the images you had of China changed?
24. What changes do you notice about yourself? How would you describe yourself now?
25. What's your most memorable experience in Germany?
26. What were the difficulties that you encountered in Germany?
27. What have you learnt during your time in Germany?
28. To what extent have your expectations of studying in Germany been fulfilled?
29. What's your plan after graduation? (e.g. family, work, further study, etc.)
30. What advice and suggestions would you give to future students?

Rechtsverbindliche Erklärung

Hiermit versichere ich an Eides statt, dass ich die eingereichte Dissertation mit dem Titel „Closer to the self while far from home: A longitudinal study about changes in Chinese students in Germany“ selbständig und ohne unerlaubte Hilfe verfasst habe. Anderer als der von mir angegebenen Hilfsmittel und Schriften habe ich mich nicht bedient. Alle wörtlich oder sinngemäß den Schriften anderer Autorinnen oder Autoren entnommenen Stellen habe ich kenntlich gamacht. Die Abhandlung ist noch nicht veröffentlicht worden und noch nicht Gegenstand eines Promotionsverfahrens gewesen.

Ich versichere zudem, dass die digitale Version dieser Dissertation mit der schriftlichen wissenschaftlichen Abhandlung übereinstimmt.

Göttingen, 24. Dezember 2020 Lili Jiang